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**February 2012**

# HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

## Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed to Manage the Military's Efforts

**G A O**Accountability \* Integrity \* Reliability

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## Why GAO Did This Study

In recent years, the Department of Defense (DOD) has increased its emphasis and spending on humanitarian assistance efforts outside of war and disaster environments. From fiscal years 2005 through 2010, DOD obligated about \$383 million on its key humanitarian assistance programs. Because civilian agencies, such as the Department of State and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also carry out many assistance efforts, DOD's efforts require close collaboration with these agencies. This report was conducted as part of GAO's response to a statutory mandate and reviewed (1) DOD's management of two key humanitarian assistance programs—the humanitarian assistance program funded through its Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) appropriation and its Humanitarian and Civic Assistance program—and (2) the extent to which DOD, State, and USAID have visibility over each others' efforts. To conduct this review, GAO analyzed funding and program information, and interviewed officials at DOD, State, USAID, nongovernment organizations, and 12 U.S. embassies.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD update its humanitarian assistance program guidance, improve data management, and conduct project evaluations, and that DOD, State, and USAID improve information sharing. GAO also suggests that Congress consider clarifying DOD's role in humanitarian assistance efforts. DOD partially agreed with the recommendations, and State and USAID agreed with the recommendations addressed to them.

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February 2012

# HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

## Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed to Manage the Military's Efforts

## What GAO Found

The Department of Defense's (DOD) management of its key humanitarian assistance programs reflects both positive practices and weaknesses:

- **Alignment with strategic goals.** DOD aligns its humanitarian assistance project planning with the goals outlined in U.S. and departmental strategies, and has clearly established processes for implementing its projects.
- **Interagency project coordination.** DOD has taken steps to coordinate with the Department of State (State) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on projects, such as seeking concurrence on project proposals and embedding representatives from their agencies at its combatant commands, but coordination challenges remain.
- **Poor data management.** DOD does not have complete information on the status or actual costs of the full range of its Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) projects. In addition, Humanitarian and Civic Assistance project data in DOD's database differ from what DOD reports to Congress.
- **Limited program evaluations.** From fiscal years 2005 through 2009, DOD had not completed 90 percent of the required 1-year post-project evaluations for its OHDACA projects, and about half of the required 30-day evaluations for those projects, and thus lacks information to determine projects' effects.
- **Limited program guidance.** DOD's primary guidance for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program is limited, is not readily accessible to all DOD personnel, and has not been updated for several years.

Furthermore, DOD, State, and USAID do not have full visibility over each others' assistance efforts, which could result in a fragmented approach to U.S. assistance. There are several initiatives under way to improve information sharing, including one directed by the National Security Council. However, no framework, such as a common database, currently exists for the agencies to readily access information on each others' efforts. Moreover, the potential for overlap exists among agencies' efforts in four areas: (1) health, (2) education, (3) infrastructure, and (4) disaster preparation. For example, both USAID and DOD are conducting health care projects in Yemen and building schools in Azerbaijan. Overlap may be appropriate in some instances, especially if agencies can leverage each others' efforts. However, given the agencies' information-sharing challenges, there are questions as to whether DOD's efforts are an efficient use of resources since USAID serves as the lead U.S. development agency. State and USAID officials said that DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts can be beneficial, especially when responding to disasters or supporting foreign militaries. However, officials said DOD's efforts can have negative political effects, particularly in fragile communities where even small gestures, such as distributing soccer balls to a particular population, can be interpreted as exhibiting favoritism. While DOD's funding for humanitarian assistance is small relative to the billions spent by State and USAID, its programs are expanding. Given interagency information challenges, the fiscally-constrained environment, and the similarity of agencies' assistance efforts, DOD and the other agencies involved in foreign assistance could benefit from additional direction from Congress on DOD's role in performing humanitarian assistance in peacetime environments.

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## Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
HCA	Humanitarian and Civic Assistance
OHDACA	Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

February 8, 2012

## Congressional Committees

While much attention has been paid to U.S. military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Department of Defense (DOD) has also increased its emphasis and spending on humanitarian assistance efforts outside of war and disaster environments in recent years. DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts include constructing schools, digging water wells, preparing communities for natural disasters, and helping local populations obtain medical care. DOD policy states that stability operations—which include providing humanitarian assistance—are a core U.S. military mission that the department shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to that of its combat operations.<sup>1</sup> From fiscal years 2005 through 2010, DOD obligated about \$383 million for its two key humanitarian assistance programs<sup>2</sup> outside of Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> Civilian agencies, such as the Department of State (State) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) carry out assistance efforts on a larger scale than DOD to build and sustain more secure and prosperous nations or provide economic or development support. Thus, DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts require close collaboration with these federal agencies to avoid potential duplication, unnecessary overlap, or fragmentation, and to maximize the return on the U.S. government's investment in foreign assistance.

This report was conducted as part of GAO's annual response to the mandate found in Public Law 111-139, Title II, section 21 (2010), which requires us to report on duplication, overlap, and fragmentation in federal government programs. We examined the U.S. military's role in conducting

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<sup>1</sup>This policy was initially established in DOD Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* (Nov. 28, 2005). The directive was subsequently reissued in modified form as DOD Instruction 3000.05, *Stability Operations* (Sept. 16, 2009).

<sup>2</sup>While DOD conducts a variety of humanitarian assistance programs, DOD's two key humanitarian assistance programs are (1) the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid humanitarian assistance program and (2) the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance program. In this report, we refer to both programs together as DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts.

<sup>3</sup>Figure is in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars.

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humanitarian assistance outside of war or disaster environments, including its management of humanitarian assistance efforts and its collaboration with State and USAID.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, we reviewed (1) DOD's management of two key humanitarian assistance programs—the humanitarian assistance program funded through its Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) appropriation<sup>5</sup> and its Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) program—and (2) the extent to which DOD, State, and USAID have visibility over each others' assistance efforts to avoid duplication, unnecessary overlap, or fragmentation.

To conduct our work, we reviewed relevant documents, including guidance, legislation, and data related to DOD's OHDACA and HCA programs. We chose to focus on these two key humanitarian assistance programs based on interviews with officials from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency; the Joint Staff; and the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations. We conducted interviews with officials from various DOD offices involved in planning and implementing DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts, including the geographic combatant commands and Special Operations Command. We also gathered and reviewed guidance, strategies, and data from State and USAID and contacted officials from a wide range of offices and a selection of 12 U.S. embassies. We selected 2 embassies within each of DOD's six geographic combatant commands' areas of responsibility that received the largest amount of OHDACA funding from fiscal years 2005 through 2010. To understand how much DOD has spent on its humanitarian assistance efforts, we obtained DOD's obligations for the OHDACA and HCA programs from fiscal years 2005 through 2010. Specifically, for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program obligations, we analyzed data from DOD's Program Budget Automated System and determined these data to be sufficiently reliable for presenting obligations from fiscal years 2005 through 2010. To

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<sup>4</sup>Our prior work has identified critical management steps and practices that can help agencies to achieve success, including aligning efforts to strategic goals, coordinating with stakeholders, collecting complete and accurate data, measuring performance, and developing policies to help achieve results.

<sup>5</sup>The OHDACA humanitarian assistance program is one component program funded by the OHDACA appropriation. This report reviews only the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, which will subsequently be referred to in this report as the OHDACA program. We did not evaluate DOD's other programs under OHDACA, such as the humanitarian mine action program and the foreign disaster relief initiative.



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determine DOD's obligations for the HCA program, we used information from DOD's annual reports to Congress on the program for the same time period.<sup>6</sup> To assess DOD's management of its humanitarian assistance programs, we obtained and reviewed DOD directives, reports, and guidance on management practices, as well as guidance, instructions, and other documents on interagency coordination between DOD and State and USAID. To assess the completeness of DOD's OHDACA and HCA project data, we obtained and analyzed data from DOD's Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System to identify discrepancies and determine the accuracy of data entered in the system. We assessed these data for reliability and determined that the data were not sufficiently reliable for presenting cost and project status data, but were sufficiently reliable to present examples of DOD humanitarian assistance efforts. We discuss these data issues in this report. To assess the extent to which DOD measures the performance of its completed humanitarian assistance projects, we analyzed a generalizable random sample of DOD's OHDACA projects that DOD identified as likely to have been completed and that cost more than \$10,000 to determine the extent to which DOD had recorded that performance of required project evaluations had been conducted after the projects were completed. We interviewed agency officials from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the Joint Staff, and the combatant commands to discuss the accuracy and completeness of project data in DOD's Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database and challenges to completing project evaluations. To assess the extent to which DOD, State, and USAID have visibility over each others' assistance efforts to avoid duplication, unnecessary overlap, or fragmentation, we reviewed guidance and documentation on information-sharing initiatives and interagency collaboration practices, and interviewed agency officials about their information-sharing practices and challenges. We also analyzed DOD, State, and USAID project data to identify areas of potential overlap between the agencies, and interviewed DOD, State, USAID, and nongovernmental organization officials about the potential positive and negative consequences of DOD's involvement in humanitarian assistance efforts.

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<sup>6</sup>DOD's fiscal year 2010 report to Congress was in draft form and had not been submitted to Congress at the time of our review.

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We conducted this performance audit from November 2010 through February 2012 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Further details on our scope and methodology can be found in appendix I.

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## Background

DOD operates two key humanitarian assistance programs: (1) the humanitarian assistance program funded through its OHDACA appropriation<sup>7</sup> and (2) the HCA program.<sup>8</sup> Projects for both the OHDACA and the HCA programs are generally planned and implemented at the geographic combatant command level, with initial project proposals developed at the embassy (country) level (see apps. II through VIII for information on each DOD geographic combatant command's OHDACA and HCA funding and efforts and app. IX for information in non-interactive form). In addition, DOD's Special Operations Command conducts humanitarian assistance efforts through its Civil Military Support Elements, in support of DOD's geographic combatant commands.<sup>9</sup> DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts have been largely performed outside of Iraq and Afghanistan.

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<sup>7</sup>The OHDACA humanitarian assistance program is one component program funded by the OHDACA appropriation. This report reviews only the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, which will be referred to in this report as the OHDACA program. We did not evaluate DOD's other programs under OHDACA, such as the humanitarian mine action program and the foreign disaster relief initiative.

<sup>8</sup>DOD defines HCA as assistance to the local populace provided by predominantly U.S. forces in conjunction with military operations and exercises limited to certain specific purposes. Additionally, the assistance must fulfill unit training requirements that incidentally create humanitarian benefit to the local populace. Joint Publication 3-57, *Civil Military Operations* (July 8, 2008).

<sup>9</sup>Special Operations Command stated that it does not receive humanitarian assistance funding but that its forces may execute projects with funding provided to the combatant commands.

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## OHDACA-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Program

DOD uses authority provided in section 2561 of Title 10 of the United States Code to conduct its OHDACA program. The program is managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, while the initial planning, prioritization, and implementation of projects are generally coordinated by the geographic combatant commands.<sup>10</sup> DOD issued its most recent guidance on the OHDACA program in 2009 to provide a framework that the geographic combatant commands can use to evaluate the appropriateness of potential humanitarian assistance projects.<sup>11</sup> DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts are aimed at

- improving DOD visibility, access, and influence while building and/or reinforcing security and stability in a host nation or region;
- providing disaster mitigation training and/or bolstering host nation capacity to avert humanitarian crises and response to disasters; and
- generating collaborative relationships with a host nation's civil society as well as positive public relations and goodwill toward DOD.

In addition to advancing U.S. defense interests, DOD's policy guidance states that humanitarian assistance efforts should address the humanitarian needs of the targeted population. As part of the OHDACA program, DOD conducts efforts that include disaster preparedness projects; basic construction; digging or improving water wells and other sanitation and drinking water projects; repairing/building rudimentary infrastructure such as roads or bridges; and the renovation of public facilities, such as schools, hospitals, clinics, and orphanages (see fig. 1).

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<sup>10</sup>The Defense Security Cooperation Agency fosters security cooperation programs vital to U.S. national security to build trust and influence in peacetime, to have access to regions of the world during times of crisis, and to ensure interoperability with coalition partners during times of conflict. Security cooperation programs provide financial and technical assistance, ensure transfer of defense materiel, provide training and services to friendly countries and allies, and promote military-to-military contacts.

<sup>11</sup>Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities, *Policy Guidance for DOD Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP)* (November 2009).

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**Figure 1: Completed Construction of a Primary School in Vietnam**



Source: DOD.

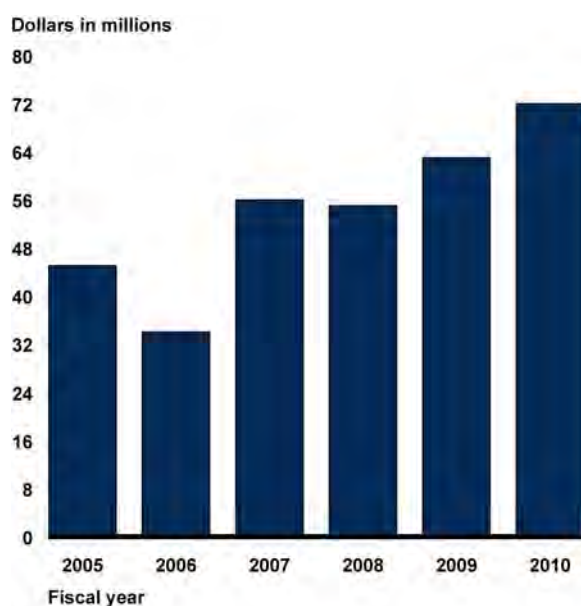
Notes: Kien Quoc Primary School is an OHDACA-funded school construction project in Vietnam that was completed in July 2010. This photograph illustrates a portion of a ceremony in which DOD turned over the completed school building to the local Vietnamese government.

From fiscal years 2005 through 2010, DOD obligated about \$328.4 million to support the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program. In fiscal year 2005, DOD obligated about \$45.2 million as compared with about \$72.4 million in fiscal year 2010, which represented an increase in obligations of about 60 percent over the time period<sup>12</sup> (see fig. 2). Over this 6-year time period, DOD's Pacific and Southern Commands obligated the highest amounts—about \$93.8 million and \$75.8 million dollars, respectively (see app. II).

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<sup>12</sup>Figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars.

**Figure 2: DOD's OHDACA-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Program Obligations**



Source: DOD.

Notes: Figures represent obligations for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, as distinguished from the broader OHDACA program. Figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars.

## Humanitarian and Civic Assistance Program

DOD conducts its HCA program using authority provided in section 401 of Title 10 of the United States Code. The HCA program was managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency through 2010, and Joint Staff officials said that the program has been managed by the Joint Staff since January 1, 2011. Initial planning, prioritization, and implementation of projects are generally coordinated by the geographic combatant commands. Two DOD instructions and implementing guidance provide direction for the HCA program.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>DOD Instruction 2205.3, *Implementing Procedures for the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) Program* (Jan. 27, 1995); DOD Instruction 2205.02, *Humanitarian and Civic Assistance Activities* (Dec. 2, 2008); and Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Policy/Programming Guidance for FY 2008 Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) Projects and Activities* (May 1, 2007).

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U.S. armed forces personnel participate in HCA efforts for strategic, operational, or tactical purposes that support military objectives while concurrently reinforcing skills required for the operational readiness of the forces executing an HCA mission. According to DOD guidance, when engaging in HCA efforts, U.S. military occupational specialists will provide services relevant to their specialties. For example, for HCA medical projects, DOD should utilize U.S. military doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, or health administrators as appropriate. Furthermore, according to DOD, under existing guidance prescribed by the Secretary of Defense, HCA efforts should, among other things,

- promote the security interests of the United States and the host nation as well as the specific operational readiness skills of the members of the U.S. armed forces who participate in the efforts;
- complement, and not duplicate, any other form of social or economic assistance that may be provided to the host nation by any other U.S. department or agency;
- assist the civilian population, that is, projects cannot benefit any individual, group, or organization engaged in military or paramilitary activity; and
- be approved by the U.S. ambassador to the foreign country where the activity will occur or by the U.S. Secretary of State.

HCA projects include basic construction and repair of public facilities; construction of surface transportation systems; construction of basic sanitation facilities; drilling wells for water; and the provision of medical, dental, surgical, and veterinary care (including education, training, and technical assistance) in rural or underserved areas of a foreign country (see fig. 3).

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**Figure 3: DOD Soldier Provides Medical Treatment to a Woman in Latin America While Engaging in an HCA Medical Readiness Activity**



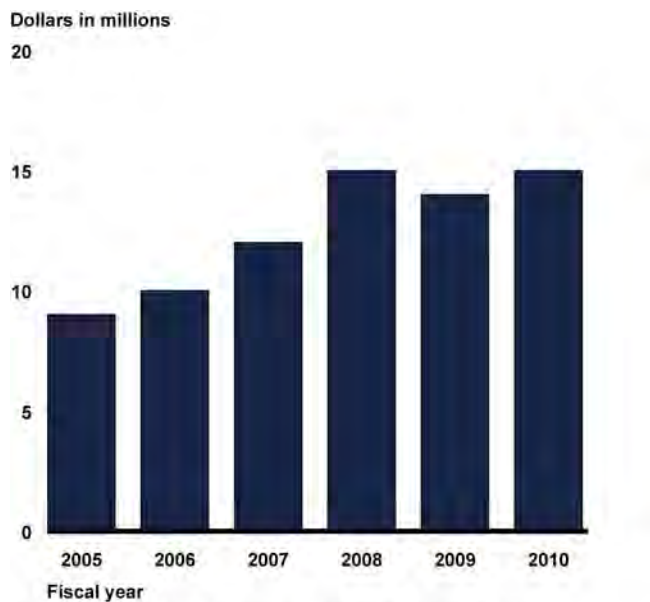
Source: DOD.

From fiscal years 2005 through 2010 DOD obligated about \$75.1 million in support of the HCA program. The obligations for the HCA program are about one quarter of the amount of the funds obligated to the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, although obligations for DOD's HCA program have increased by about 75 percent from fiscal years 2005 to 2010.<sup>14</sup> In fiscal year 2005, DOD obligated about \$8.5 million compared with about \$14.9 million in fiscal year 2010 (see fig. 4). Over this 6-year period, obligations were the highest for HCA projects in DOD's Southern and Pacific Commands' geographical areas, at about \$32.5 million and \$21.9 million, respectively (see app. II).

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<sup>14</sup>Figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars. These figures do not include some costs associated with HCA activities, such as costs for transportation and military personnel.

**Figure 4: DOD's Humanitarian and Civic Assistance Obligations**



Sources: DOD's reports to Congress on HCA activities, fiscal years 2005 through 2009, and a draft version of DOD's fiscal year 2010 report to Congress on HCA activities, which had not been submitted to Congress at the time of our review.

Note: Figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars.

## Other Humanitarian Assistance-Type Efforts

In addition to the OHDACA and HCA programs, DOD conducts other humanitarian assistance-type efforts, such as HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention assistance to foreign military personnel and their families. For example, from fiscal years 2005 through 2010, DOD obligated about \$477.3 million to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and about \$27.3 million on its Defense Health Program for HIV/AIDS efforts.<sup>15</sup> DOD also conducts efforts to help nations in Africa and Asia respond to an influenza pandemic, using \$15 million provided by USAID for efforts from fiscal years 2008 through 2012. In addition, DOD has created a coordination group to develop global health guidance for the department and examine DOD's role in global health efforts.

<sup>15</sup>Figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars and do not include all of the administrative costs associated with these programs.



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## DOD's Humanitarian Assistance Program Management Incorporates Positive Practices, but Several Weaknesses Hinder the Effective Use of Resources

DOD's management of its two key humanitarian assistance programs—OHDACA and HCA—has incorporated positive practices, such as aligning project planning to U.S. and departmental strategic goals and collaborating with State and USAID on individual projects. However, DOD is unable to determine whether it is using its resources efficiently and effectively because of three key weaknesses in management oversight: (1) incomplete project information because of data management problems, (2) the absence of post-project evaluations for determining the effects of DOD's efforts, and (3) limited guidance for the OHDACA program.

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## DOD Aligns Humanitarian Assistance Project Planning to Strategic Goals and Has Clearly Established Processes for Implementing Projects

Recognizing that strategic plans are the starting point and underpinning for setting program goals, DOD has generally aligned its OHDACA and HCA project planning to U.S. and departmental strategic goals, and it has clearly established processes for project implementation. DOD's policy guidance supports the use of DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts to achieve U.S. national security and foreign policy goals. Moreover, DOD's *Guidance for Employment of the Force* and its *Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan* require each geographic combatant command to produce a theater campaign plan and specific posture requirements for its given area of responsibility.<sup>16</sup> Combatant command officials told us that they link the goals of their humanitarian assistance projects to specific goals or objectives identified in the command's theater campaign plan or in DOD's overarching strategic planning guidance. For example, Northern Command officials said they develop a prioritized list of potential humanitarian assistance projects each year based in part on identified missions, goals, and priorities from the command's theater campaign plan. Similarly, Central Command stated that requirements for its OHDACA projects are derived from the command's theater campaign plan objectives.

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<sup>16</sup>According to the *Guidance for Employment of the Force* and the *Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan for FY 2008*, CJCSI 3110.01G (Mar. 1, 2008), each of the geographic combatant commanders is required to produce a theater campaign plan. Furthermore, each geographic combatant commander, except the Commander of U.S. Northern Command, is also required to develop theater posture plans as annexes to the theater campaign plan.

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In addition, DOD has clear processes in place for planning, prioritizing, and implementing OHDACA projects. Policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms that enforce management's directives are an integral part of an entity's planning, implementing, reviewing, and accountability for stewardship of government resources and achieving effective results.<sup>17</sup> The overall OHDACA program is managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, while the planning, prioritization, and implementation of projects generally are coordinated through the geographic combatant commands. Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials explained that their office provides funding for the OHDACA program to the combatant commands in response to annual budget requests submitted by the commands. They said that when providing funds, they review factors such as the commands' past funding levels and how commands have executed past funding. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency also reviews and approves all individual projects that cost more than \$10,000, and officials explained that its review considers the justifications for a command's project proposals and whether a project is aligned with the command's strategic guidance. The initial planning and development of OHDACA projects for all of the combatant commands, except for Northern Command, are generally conducted at the country level with input required from USAID officials.<sup>18</sup> Some of the commands permit project proposals to be initiated by host nations or other government agencies, such as USAID. The processes for prioritizing individual OHDACA projects vary across the commands. For example, Pacific Command has recently developed an activity prioritization process that involves assigning points for the degree to which a project meets established criteria, while at Central Command, officials said that projects are prioritized according to the assets available to execute a project in a given country. Many of the commands use entities such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the Naval Facilities Command to implement their projects.

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<sup>17</sup>GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

<sup>18</sup>Officials from Northern Command explained that their projects are developed at the combatant command level rather than the country level because DOD staff at the embassies in Mexico and the Bahamas generally did not have enough time to plan humanitarian assistance efforts. The officials acknowledged that it would be better for the projects to be developed at the country level because there would be greater familiarity with the country's needs.

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The HCA program was managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency through 2010, and Joint Staff officials said that the program has been managed by the Joint Staff since January 1, 2011. Joint Staff officials explained that they serve in a quality assurance role to ensure that projects have been coordinated among the combatant commands, interagency stakeholders, and host nations. They also said that the Joint Staff reviews and approves HCA projects. The overall planning, prioritization, and implementation of HCA projects generally are coordinated by the geographic combatant commands, similar to the OHDACA program.<sup>19</sup> Initial project planning and development at all of the combatant commands are generally conducted at the country level, with input from State officials, and the processes for prioritizing and implementing HCA projects can vary across the commands. For example, Pacific Command's business rules require the same approach for prioritizing, approving, and implementing HCA projects that it uses for OHDACA projects, as discussed above, and European Command explained that it budgets its projects through the command's typical operation and maintenance budgeting process.

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### DOD Is Coordinating with State and USAID When Implementing Projects, but Challenges Remain

Over the past several years, DOD has taken several steps to coordinate with State and USAID when planning and implementing its humanitarian assistance projects. For example, DOD guidance on its OHDACA program states that DOD will seek USAID concurrence on project proposals early in the project identification process, and certain information concerning that collaboration will be documented in DOD's project database. Moreover, DOD's guidance on its HCA program states that combatant commanders are responsible for ensuring that HCA projects that cost more than \$10,000 are conducted with the approval of the Secretary of State or his/her designee. DOD has representatives from USAID or State embedded within each of its geographic combatant commands, and it has placed liaisons at State and USAID offices (see table 1). Officials from all three agencies said that these interagency personnel at the commands have helped improve coordination with DOD, although the roles and quantity of these interagency personnel may be limited. For example, some State and USAID officials explained that their advisors assigned to DOD's combatant commands are able to report on

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<sup>19</sup>Northern Command officials said that they do not conduct HCA activities, and no HCA projects for the command were reported to Congress from fiscal years 2005 through 2009; therefore, this discussion applies to the remaining five geographic combatant commands.

what is happening in their respective areas of responsibility but cannot make decisions or speak on behalf of their home agencies.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, according to USAID officials, USAID made the decision to begin sending lower-ranking officials to serve as development advisors in most of the combatant commands because of staffing shortages. Officials from both USAID and DOD said that this decision could negatively affect interagency collaboration at the commands because DOD tends to place a heavy emphasis on rank, and lower-ranking USAID officials may not have as much access to senior command leadership.

**Table 1: State and USAID Representatives within DOD’s Combatant Commands**

Combatant command	State	USAID	Total
Africa Command	10	3	13
Central Command	3	3	6
European Command	3	2	5
Northern Command	3	0	3
Pacific Command	5	2	7
Southern Command	7	2	9

Sources: DOD and USAID.

Notes: Personnel are stationed at the combatant commands’ headquarters. Also, USAID officials identified additional positions at some of the combatant commands, but these positions are currently vacant.

Each of the 12 U.S. embassies we contacted cited examples of efforts to promote interagency coordination. For example, the U.S. embassy in Kenya has created an Executive Steering Group consisting of officials from State, USAID, and DOD who meet monthly to discuss DOD’s humanitarian assistance projects and other efforts that intersect with larger diplomatic and development objectives. Similarly, the U.S. embassies in the Kyrgyz Republic and Moldova have established assistance working groups made up of interagency officials who meet at least weekly to coordinate U.S. government assistance efforts, including DOD’s humanitarian assistance projects, across the embassy. Several other embassies that we contacted have also established interagency groups to facilitate coordination, such as those in Albania, Peru, Uganda, and Djibouti. In addition, DOD’s Pacific Command has begun its “3Ds

<sup>20</sup>USAID said that representatives from its Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance are authorized to make decisions and speak on behalf of the office.

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Forward” initiative intended to improve coordination among DOD, State, and USAID efforts in the Asia Pacific region.<sup>21</sup>

Despite all of these various collaboration efforts, DOD faces challenges in interagency collaboration on its humanitarian assistance projects. Specifically, many officials stated that interagency collaboration tends to be personality driven; when staff are replaced, relationships have to be rebuilt and progress can be lost. Moreover, coordination on DOD’s humanitarian assistance projects can be difficult given the differences in total numbers of personnel among DOD, State, and USAID. DOD has about 30 times more personnel than State and USAID combined.<sup>22</sup> USAID officials said that their agency has staffing shortages, and it can be a burden on USAID personnel to have to coordinate and provide expertise to DOD on DOD’s humanitarian assistance projects. Officials also said that the frequent rotation of personnel can lead to continuity challenges.

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**DOD Does Not Have Complete Information on the Full Range of Its Humanitarian Assistance Projects**

DOD does not have complete information on the full range of humanitarian assistance projects it conducts, which creates uncertainty as to whether DOD is able to provide accurate, complete project information to other offices within the department, to interagency stakeholders, or to Congress.

**DOD Does Not Know the Status or Actual Costs of All of Its OHDACA Projects**

DOD does not know the status of all of its OHDACA projects—such as when a project is going to be implemented, when it is in progress, or when and if it has been completed—or the actual costs of nearly one in three of its OHDACA projects because it does not consistently update project information in its database, the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System. It is important that agencies have complete, accurate, and consistent data to inform policy, document

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<sup>21</sup>In the initiative name, “3Ds” stands for defense, diplomacy, and development. The initiative aims to identify and coordinate Pacific Command, State, and USAID efforts in the region. For example, in Vietnam, Pacific Command recommended coordinating with State and USAID on the command’s school-building programs, including consulting with USAID to determine appropriate school construction sites.

<sup>22</sup>These personnel figures are intended to provide a general understanding of the differing sizes of the agencies and do not represent the number of officials dedicated to humanitarian assistance efforts.

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performance, and support decision making.<sup>23</sup> Our analysis of a DOD list of OHDACA projects<sup>24</sup> that had been marked as “completed” in DOD’s database found the data to be incomplete and inaccurate. For example, DOD’s list indicated that 35 projects had been completed by Pacific Command in fiscal years 2005 through 2010, fewer than had been completed by each of the other combatant commands except for Northern Command. Yet Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials told us that Pacific Command was one of the two commands that conducted the most projects in the same time frame. In addition, the total cost recorded in the database for these 35 projects was about \$5 million, while Pacific Command’s actual obligation for its OHDACA projects during this same period was almost \$89 million. In response to our efforts to clarify these discrepancies, the officials acknowledged that the number of projects that had actually been completed was likely underrepresented in the list. They explained that DOD personnel do not consistently update the projects’ status in the database, and thus many projects that were completed had probably not been reflected as such in the database. Officials from several combatant commands confirmed that keeping DOD’s database updated was a challenge because of issues such as having a limited number of personnel available to work on OHDACA projects. However, without updated project information, DOD does not have accurate information to make program management decisions or report information to other agencies or to Congress.

In some cases, DOD may have better information about its OHDACA projects at the country level. When we sought information from some DOD personnel stationed at U.S. embassies who were responsible for OHDACA projects in those countries, officials at some embassies were able to provide us with additional details about whether projects had been completed. For example, officials from the U.S. embassies in Bangladesh and Moldova were able to provide us with more recent information than that found in DOD’s database about the current status of projects. However, officials from U.S. embassies in Indonesia, Kenya, and Uganda

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<sup>23</sup>GAO, *Assessing the Reliability of Computer-Processed Data*, [GAO-09-680G](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 2009), and *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, [GAO/GGD-96-118](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 1996).

<sup>24</sup>This list of projects was provided to us by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, which manages the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program.

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responded to our inquiries with the same information that was available in DOD's database—which may not have been accurate.

In addition to not knowing the status of all of its projects, DOD does not know how much it has spent on some OHDACA projects because its database is not consistently updated with actual cost information after projects have been completed. Across all of the geographic combatant commands from fiscal years 2007 through 2010, DOD had not updated its database with projects' actual cost information about 30 percent of the time for projects that were identified as completed.<sup>25</sup> Although DOD officials said that the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database is not used for financial management purposes,<sup>26</sup> the database contains fields for estimated and actual project costs that officials said should be updated by personnel at the combatant commands. DOD officials explained that this project cost information is intended to be used for program management purposes, so that they can review the extent to which the projects' actual costs differed from the projects' estimated costs identified when they were submitted for approval. DOD officials acknowledged that the combatant commands do not consistently update the cost information in the database. They also said that maintaining accurate project cost information in the database is a challenge because information cannot be automatically pulled in from DOD's financial management systems.

#### DOD's Data on HCA Projects Differ from Those Reported to Congress

DOD's database also does not provide complete information about HCA projects, with information in the database differing from what has been reported to Congress. DOD is required to submit reports annually to

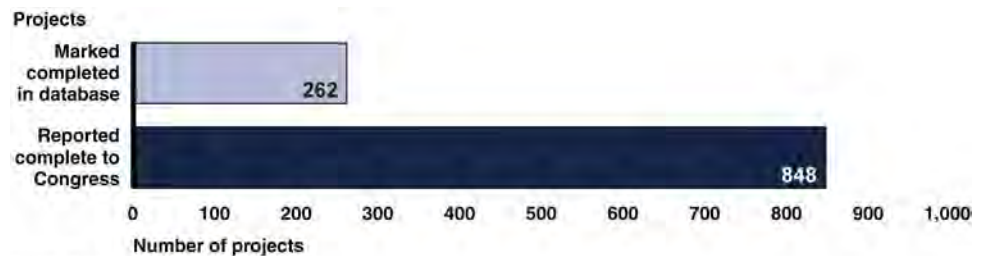
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<sup>25</sup>Across all of the combatant commands, we found that DOD's database had not been updated with actual cost information for 25 percent of projects marked as completed in the database for fiscal year 2007, or 49 out of 196 projects; 32 percent of projects for fiscal year 2008, or 119 out of 373 projects; 38 percent of fiscal year 2009 projects, or 130 out of 341 projects; and 24 percent of fiscal year 2010 projects, or 104 out of 429 projects. Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials told us that the data for fiscal years 2005 and 2006 might not be reliable because they had been imported into the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System from a legacy system, so we excluded those 2 fiscal years from this analysis.

<sup>26</sup>DOD uses another database, the Program Budget Automated System, for financial management purposes. However, cost information in this database is itemized only to the combatant command level, and thus does not provide visibility over the costs of individual projects.

Congress on its HCA program.<sup>27</sup> Officials from the Joint Staff and the combatant commands told us that they use the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database to manage and track their HCA projects.<sup>28</sup> However, we found that the number of HCA projects marked as completed in DOD's database was far fewer than the number of completed HCA projects that were reported to Congress each year from fiscal years 2007 through 2009,<sup>29</sup> which raises concerns about how HCA project records are being updated and tracked in DOD's database. Figure 5 shows the number of completed HCA projects identified in DOD's reports to Congress as compared with the number of HCA projects marked completed in DOD's database.

**Figure 5: Completed HCA Projects Reported to Congress as Compared with HCA Projects Marked "Completed" in DOD's Database, Fiscal Years 2007 through 2009**



Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.

Notes: At the time of our review, DOD had not submitted a report to Congress on fiscal year 2010 HCA projects. Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials told us that the data for fiscal years 2005 and 2006 might not be reliable, so we excluded those 2 fiscal years from this analysis.

A Defense Security Cooperation Agency official said that the HCA project information reported to Congress was provided by each combatant command to the agency, and agency officials did not know from where

<sup>27</sup>The annual report is required to include a list of the countries in which HCA activities were carried out during the prior fiscal year, the type and a description of the activities performed in each country, and the amount expended in carrying out each activity.

<sup>28</sup>Northern Command officials said that they do not conduct HCA activities, and no HCA projects were reported to Congress for the command from fiscal years 2005 through 2009; therefore, this discussion applies to the remaining five geographic combatant commands.

<sup>29</sup>Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials told us that the data for fiscal years 2005 and 2006 might not be reliable because they had been imported into the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System from a legacy system, so we excluded those 2 fiscal years from this analysis.



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the combatant commands obtained the information. However, when we asked officials from each of the combatant commands where they record information about their HCA projects, they all responded that they use the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database to manage their HCA projects. Our analysis of the information in DOD's database showed that the HCA data in the database varied by combatant command. For example, the database showed that only 2 HCA projects had been marked completed for Pacific Command and 6 projects had been marked completed for Southern Command from fiscal years 2007 through 2009. However, DOD's reports to Congress listed at least 81 completed projects for each of these commands in each fiscal year over the same time frame. The HCA project data in the database appeared to be more comprehensive for Africa, European, and Central Commands from fiscal years 2007 through 2009, in that the number of projects marked completed or funded in the database was generally closer to the number of projects included in the report to Congress. Our analysis of the information in DOD's reports to Congress also showed that some inaccurate information about HCA projects may have been reported. For example, DOD's fiscal year 2008 report to Congress included descriptions for what appeared to be the same projects in both Tanzania and Uganda that were reported for both DOD's Africa and Central Commands. However, an Africa Command official stated that the projects should have been listed only for Central Command in DOD's report to Congress because Central Command funded the projects.<sup>30</sup>

DOD's combatant commands generally continue to program and budget for new projects, even though DOD lacks complete information in its database about past OHDACA or HCA projects. Officials said that DOD is currently in the process of updating its guidance for both of its humanitarian assistance programs, which provides the department a timely opportunity to develop procedures to ensure that the information in its database is complete, accurate, and consistent. However, without requiring complete data on its humanitarian assistance efforts and imposing consequences, such as requiring complete data on previous projects as part of the approval process for new projects, DOD may not have essential information to inform future planning about its projects and

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<sup>30</sup>Africa Command was designated fully operational on September 30, 2008, and consolidated responsibilities for DOD activities in Africa that had previously been shared by Central, European, and Pacific Commands.

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will not be well positioned to provide accurate information about its humanitarian assistance efforts to interested parties.

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**DOD Is Not Consistently Evaluating Projects and Cannot Be Certain Its Projects Are Effective**

**Project Evaluation Requirements Are Not Consistently Followed**

DOD is not consistently evaluating its projects, and therefore it cannot determine whether its humanitarian assistance efforts are meeting their intended goals, having positive effects, or represent an efficient use of resources.

DOD has established project evaluation requirements but is not consistently following them. For the OHDACA program, DOD guidance states that “after-action reviews,” or project evaluations, are to be conducted for all projects within 30 days of project completion.<sup>31</sup> For projects costing more than \$10,000, a second evaluation should be conducted 1 year after project completion to document sustained outcomes. We drew a generalizable random sample of OHDACA projects that DOD identified as likely to have been completed and that cost more than \$10,000. From fiscal year 2005 through fiscal year 2009, we estimated that 1-year evaluation reports were not completed for 90 percent of these projects, and that the 30-day evaluation reports were not completed for about half, or about 53 percent of these projects (see fig. 6).<sup>32</sup> Officials across DOD acknowledged that project evaluation was an area of weakness and cited several reasons why the department was not consistently performing project evaluations, including lack of personnel available to conduct evaluations, difficulties visiting project sites because

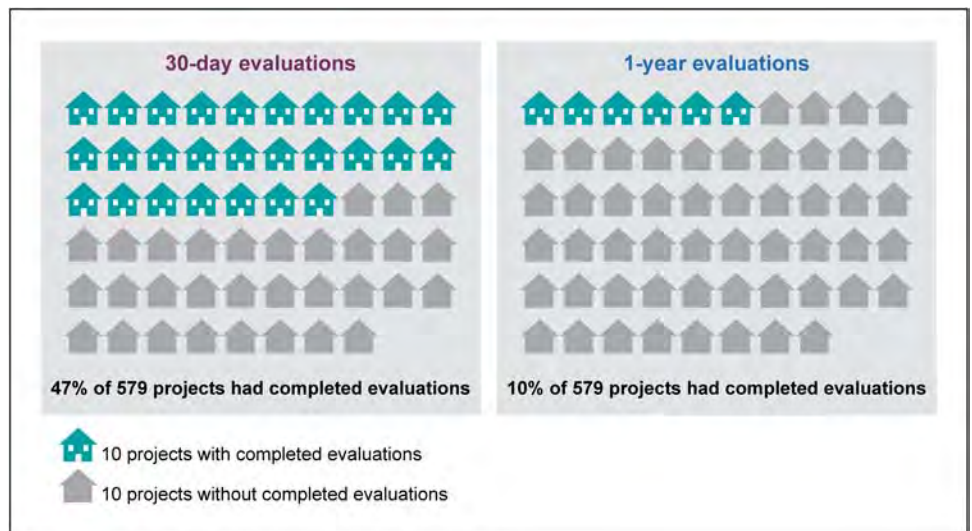
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<sup>31</sup> Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities, *Policy Guidance for DOD Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP)*.

<sup>32</sup> To determine this estimate, we analyzed the presence of completed project evaluations in the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System in a generalizable random sample of 97 OHDACA projects, out of a total of 579 projects, from the list of projects funded by the combatant commands from fiscal years 2005 through 2009 that DOD identified as likely to have been completed and that had costs greater than \$10,000. All estimates based on our sample are subject to sampling error. The margin of error for these estimates is no more than plus or minus 10 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. In addition, we estimate that 10 percent of the projects identified as likely to have been completed had not in fact been completed, meaning that no assessments were due at the time that we reviewed the project files.

of political instabilities within some countries, and confusion concerning the amount of funding available to perform project evaluations.<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 6: Estimates of Post-Project Evaluations for OHDACA Projects Costing over \$10,000 for Fiscal Years 2005 through 2009**



Source: GAO analysis of Defense Security Cooperation Agency data.

Notes: Figure is based on a generalizable random sample of projects that DOD identified as likely to have been completed. The margin of error for these estimates is no more than plus or minus 10 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. In addition, we estimate that 10 percent of the projects identified as likely to have been completed had not in fact been completed, meaning that no assessments were due at the time that we reviewed the project files.

Because of concerns over the completeness and reliability of data in DOD's database of HCA project information, we did not generate and analyze a sample of HCA projects from the database. However, it is also likely that DOD is not conducting evaluations for HCA projects. DOD's combatant commands are required to prepare midyear and end-of-year reports that cover all HCA projects conducted during those time frames, and to broadly assess their overall HCA efforts within 2 fiscal years. Joint Staff officials told us that they did not monitor whether evaluations of HCA projects have been completed prior to January 1, 2011, when they began managing the HCA program, and that completing the evaluations is a

<sup>33</sup>This confusion concerning the amount of funding available to perform project evaluations is caused by the misperception that OHDACA funds cannot be used to conduct project evaluations, as discussed later in this report.

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combatant command responsibility. Joint Staff officials said that they are currently reviewing project evaluations at each combatant command, and that beginning in February 2012, they plan to address project evaluations in their monthly teleconferences with the commands. However, officials from several combatant commands told us that evaluations of HCA projects are often not completed or that there is minimal follow-up after projects are completed. While one of the purposes of HCA projects is to train military personnel, Joint Staff officials said that determining the long-term effects of their projects is important and that they plan to propose language emphasizing the importance of long-term project evaluations in DOD's updated HCA policy guidance. The lack of consistent project evaluations appears to be a long-standing problem in the HCA program. In 1993, we reported that DOD's combatant commands were not evaluating their HCA programs. Moreover, we reported that HCA projects did not always meet the host country's needs, and that some projects were not being maintained or used. We recommended at that time that the commands evaluate their HCA projects and determine their effectiveness, and that DOD ensure that projects contribute to U.S. foreign policy objectives and have the full support of the host nation.<sup>34</sup>

Agency managers need performance information to ensure that programs meet intended goals, assess the efficiency of processes, and promote continuous improvement.<sup>35</sup> Without consistently evaluating its projects, DOD lacks information to demonstrate tangible positive or negative effects of many of its projects. Furthermore, Congress needs information to determine whether a program is working well in order to support its oversight of agencies and their budgets. Officials from many of DOD's combatant commands told us that humanitarian assistance projects help them gain access and influence in foreign nations, build valuable relations, or promote stability in foreign countries or regions. For example, DOD officials asserted that vaccinating cattle in Uganda helps counterterrorism efforts in Somalia, but they did not provide any documentation to support this position.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, we have previously

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<sup>34</sup>GAO, *Department of Defense: Changes Needed to the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance Program*, [GAO/NSIAD-94-57](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 2, 1993).

<sup>35</sup>[GAO/GGD-96-118](#).

<sup>36</sup>DOD's fiscal year 2008 report to Congress on its HCA efforts describes a project that involved assisting the Ugandan government in providing healthy livestock to civilians relocating from internally displaced persons camps to their former villages, but does not mention how the project relates to efforts to combat terrorism in Somalia.

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DOD Has Not Addressed Lack  
of Project Evaluations or  
Assessments of Long-Term  
Effects

reported instances of unintended consequences because of problems such as the lack of information on past DOD projects.<sup>37</sup> For example, DOD officials had discovered a dilapidated school in Kenya with a placard noting that the school had been donated by the department. However, the existence of the school was unknown to current DOD staff in the region, and its poor condition could promote unfavorable views of the U.S. military. While DOD officials, for example, expressed confidence that such instances were no longer occurring, without consistently evaluating projects, DOD cannot be certain of project consequences—whether positive or negative.

Although there is widespread consensus among DOD offices and all of the geographic combatant commands that project follow-up is an area of weakness, DOD has not assessed its evaluation process or requirements to determine whether changes are needed to employ a more risk-based evaluation approach in order to strategically allocate resources. Given concerns expressed by officials from several combatant commands regarding the costs associated with conducting project evaluations and their resource limitations, it may be inefficient to evaluate some of DOD's lower-cost humanitarian assistance projects, as there might not be a sufficient return on investment to justify the expenses associated with performing the follow-up. We have advocated for a comprehensive risk management approach as a framework for decision making that assesses the values and risks of various courses of action as a tool for reexamining defense programs, setting priorities, and allocating resources, and that provides for the use of performance measures to assess outcomes.<sup>38</sup> Under such a risk-based approach, it is possible that not all humanitarian assistance projects would need to be evaluated.

Moreover, officials from several combatant commands said that it is difficult for them to measure the long-term effects of DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts. However, several resources exist that DOD could potentially leverage to assess its humanitarian assistance efforts over the

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<sup>37</sup>GAO, *Defense Management: DOD Needs to Determine the Future of Its Horn of Africa Task Force*, [GAO-10-504](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 15, 2010).

<sup>38</sup>GAO, *High-Risk Series: An Update*, [GAO-05-207](#) (Washington, D.C.: January 2005), and *Defense Management: Additional Actions Needed to Enhance DOD's Risk-Based Approach for Making Resource Decisions*, [GAO-06-13](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 15, 2005).

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long term.<sup>39</sup> For example, in 2011, the RAND Corporation developed the *Prototype Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluating DOD Humanitarian Assistance Projects* that was designed as a guide for planning and executing project assessments for both OHDACA and HCA projects. Some combatant command officials said that they were aware of the RAND Corporation handbook and were beginning to use it. In addition, State and nongovernmental organization officials suggested that DOD examine resources such as the Sphere Project,<sup>40</sup> which has developed minimum standards to achieve in humanitarian response as well as key indicators that can be used to show whether a standard has been attained. Furthermore, USAID requires performance management plans, which are tools to plan and manage the process of monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on progress toward achieving its assistance objectives. It has also developed performance indicators in areas such as democracy and governance and for the HIV/AIDS programs to help assess their progress.<sup>41</sup> USAID and State both recently issued new evaluation policies that emphasize the importance of project follow-up.

Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials said that the new version of DOD's project database, the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System, will have expanded features that will better enable DOD to capture whether the long-term goals of its humanitarian assistance projects have been met. For example, the agency stated that in developing the new version of the database, particular attention has been paid to facilitating and simplifying ease of use in order to encourage the capture of relevant data from users. Specifically, officials said that there will be check boxes to indicate whether project evaluations have been completed, and the database will automatically send e-mail messages to project stakeholders to alert them of the need to complete

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<sup>39</sup>We did not independently evaluate these resources to assess how they might be applied to DOD's efforts.

<sup>40</sup>The Sphere Project was initiated by a group of nongovernmental organizations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. Its goal in developing the standards was to improve the quality of humanitarian response and enhance the accountability of the system. The Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, 3d ed. (2011).

<sup>41</sup>We have previously reported on challenges in monitoring and evaluating some of USAID's projects. See GAO, *Afghanistan Development: Enhancements to Performance Management and Evaluation Efforts Could Improve USAID's Agricultural Programs*, [GAO-10-368](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2010).

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the required evaluations. In addition, the officials said that the database will contain specific evaluation questions based on the project's goals. These aspects of the database were still under development at the time of our review, and thus we were unable to review the evaluation questions or assess whether they will incorporate some of the indicators mentioned above. While these changes, if implemented, could help address some of DOD's project evaluation weaknesses, until DOD reviews its project evaluation requirements to make any necessary changes, measures the long-term impact of its efforts, and consistently conducts its required evaluations, the department will be unable to determine whether these efforts are an effective use of DOD's resources in an increasingly constrained fiscal environment.

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### DOD's Guidance for Its Largest Humanitarian Assistance Program Is Limited

DOD has not issued a departmental instruction to guide the OHDACA program. The two primary sources of guidance that DOD uses for the OHDACA program—a policy cable and a chapter in DOD's security assistance management manual<sup>42</sup>—have not been updated in several years. The guidance is limited and not easily accessible to all DOD personnel, which could contribute to misinterpretation. For example, several officials told us they believed that OHDACA funds could not be used to perform assessments of completed humanitarian assistance projects. While there are some restrictions on the use of OHDACA funds for program evaluation, DOD attorneys confirmed that two required OHDACA project evaluations—at 30 days and at 1 year after project completion—could be properly funded as part of the OHDACA program. Furthermore, the cable, last updated in 2009, is only disseminated to a limited number of people and is not readily accessible to all DOD personnel. Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials also acknowledged that the guidance in the security assistance management manual, last updated in 2003, is out of date and does not reflect the current operating environment.

DOD has issued two departmental instructions for the HCA program, which receives less funding than the OHDACA program. As a departmental practice, DOD issues instructions for certain programs, which establish policy or provide general procedures for implementing policy. Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials explained—and

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<sup>42</sup>DOD, *Security Assistance Management Manual*, DOD 5105.38-M, ch.12 (Oct. 3, 2003).

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officials from several combatant commands agreed—that issuing a departmental instruction would be helpful in ensuring that everyone shares a common understanding of the humanitarian assistance program, the processes and guidelines for these projects, and the roles and functions of the relevant players and agencies. Moreover, an instruction could help facilitate consistency in program implementation, which is especially important given the frequent rotations of military personnel. Officials indicated that DOD is in the process of reexamining the existing guidance and plans to issue an instruction and updated guidance for the OHDACA program in early 2012. Until DOD issues an instruction and updated guidance for the ODHACA humanitarian assistance program, there could be continued confusion or inconsistency in how the combatant commands implement the program.

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## Information-Sharing Challenges and Potential for Overlap among the Agencies' Efforts Could Result in a Fragmented Approach to U.S. Assistance Efforts

DOD, State, and USAID do not have full visibility over each others' assistance efforts, which could result in a fragmented approach to U.S. assistance. While the agencies have various initiatives under way to share information about their humanitarian or development assistance efforts, they face two main challenges: (1) the initiatives are not interoperable or coordinated across the agencies and (2) the agencies use different terminology to describe similar assistance efforts. Without full visibility over each others' efforts, the potential exists for unnecessary overlap in U.S. assistance efforts, which ultimately raises questions about DOD's expanding role in providing humanitarian assistance.

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## Initiatives Are Under Way to Improve Interagency Information Sharing, but Challenges Remain

Various initiatives are under way to improve visibility over the agencies' assistance efforts, but there is no framework, such as a common database, to readily share information across the agencies. DOD guidance requires collaboration and coordination with USAID, and with State as appropriate, when planning humanitarian assistance efforts.<sup>43</sup> Our prior work has also cited the importance of information sharing to

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<sup>43</sup>Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities, *Policy Guidance for DOD Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP)*, and DOD Instruction 2205.3, *Implementing Procedures for the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) Program*.



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Several Initiatives Are in Progress to Improve Information Sharing, but They Lack Coordination

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facilitate interagency collaboration on national security issues.<sup>44</sup> Interagency information sharing can be especially important given the shift toward transnational threats that may require a broader perspective to effectively plan and implement humanitarian assistance efforts. For example, issues such as pandemic outbreaks, disaster response and management, and food security are all complex issues that necessitate coordination across the agencies. In addition, we have identified as a good collaborative practice the need to establish compatible policies, procedures, and other means to operate across agency boundaries, including compatible standards and data systems.<sup>45</sup>

DOD, State, and USAID recognize the need to improve information sharing, and they have begun to take steps to address the challenge. For example, officials within the agencies are attempting to enhance working-level coordination through efforts such as the 3D Planning Group,<sup>46</sup> which aims to examine DOD's, State's, and USAID's different strategic planning efforts. The 3D Planning Group works to develop an environment where the agency officials can resolve interagency planning challenges and institutionalize processes to improve collaboration on interagency planning. However, according to participants, the planning group is an ad hoc effort—participation is voluntary, outside of other responsibilities, and it may not be a high priority for the agencies. Moreover, as shown in table 2, the agencies have various technological initiatives under way to improve information sharing.

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<sup>44</sup>GAO, *Interagency Collaboration: Key Issues for Congressional Oversight of National Security Strategies, Organizations, Workforce, and Information Sharing*, [GAO-09-904SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 25, 2009).

<sup>45</sup>GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, [GAO-06-15](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

<sup>46</sup>In the initiative title, "3D" stands for defense, diplomacy, and development.

**Table 2: Key DOD, State, and USAID Information-Sharing Initiatives**

Information-sharing initiative	Goals	Lead agency	Participating agencies	Intended audience
<b>Foreign Assistance Dashboard</b>	Collect and provide all U.S. government foreign assistance information in a standard, accessible, and easy-to-use format	Initiative directed by the National Security Council and implemented by State and USAID	Currently limited to State, USAID, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation	General public, foreign nations, Congress, U.S. government agencies, and donors
<b>Foreign Assistance Coordination and Tracking System (FACTS Info)<sup>a</sup></b>	Collect and report data on PEPFAR foreign assistance funding for HIV/AIDS	State and USAID	All PEPFAR implementing agencies	Currently limited to PEPFAR implementing agencies, with the intent to share information with all FACTS Info users
<b>Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System</b>	Manage the life cycle of DOD's OHDACA-funded and HCA humanitarian assistance projects	DOD	DOD supplies project data; State and USAID have access to review data	DOD and U.S. government agencies
<b>Global Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System</b>	Link all of the combatant commands' and DOD components' security cooperation efforts in one system	DOD	Initially limited to DOD	Initially to be an internal database for DOD, with the intent to share information across all interagency partners
<b>Foreign Assistance Database</b>	Compile and report U.S. foreign assistance data annually	USAID	Nineteen agencies	Donor countries from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; the database is also available to the general public

Source: GAO analysis of DOD, State, and USAID data.

Notes: PEPFAR is the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. PEPFAR is led by State, but is an interagency effort to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS around the world.

DOD's two key humanitarian assistance programs are the humanitarian assistance program funded through DOD's OHDACA appropriation and the HCA program, which is funded by the military services through their operation and maintenance funds appropriations.

<sup>a</sup>FACTS Info supports U.S. foreign assistance budget formulation and execution for State and USAID, and enables the management of planning and reporting requirements, and is not limited to PEPFAR data. We chose to highlight the use of FACTS Info to share PEPFAR data as an example of how the system can be used to share information.

While these initiatives may help improve information sharing, many involve similar stakeholders and audiences, and officials told us that currently the various agencies' initiatives are not interoperable or coordinated. For example, State officials told us that there is some overlap between the data compiled for the Foreign Assistance Database and those compiled for the Foreign Assistance Dashboard. Furthermore, while the Foreign Assistance Dashboard and Foreign Assistance

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Database will contain information from the same data request, it is not expected that the two systems will be able to share information, and officials from DOD, USAID, and State confirmed that their information-sharing initiatives are not interoperable with other agencies' initiatives. Officials responsible for the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, Foreign Assistance Coordination and Tracking System, and Global Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System said that as these systems are refined, their intended audiences will expand to include many of the same participants and users, and thus coordination will be critical in order to avoid unnecessary overlap.

Officials said that interagency information sharing can be challenging at the agency headquarters level because communication can be informal, ad hoc, or personality driven. For example, State officials said that the agencies generally do not share information or communicate their budgetary plans for humanitarian and development assistance. Officials from DOD, State, and USAID thought that the extent to which interagency communication occurs tends to be personality driven and can vary based on the individuals involved. Furthermore, DOD officials said that collaboration can be difficult because when new staff members arrive, they have to rebuild relationships to facilitate information sharing, and progress in coordinating humanitarian assistance projects across the agencies can be lost. USAID officials also stated that coordination with DOD varies by country and can depend largely on how well stakeholders within the country share information. According to National Security Staff, different agencies have said that there would be benefits to having information about all U.S. government foreign assistance efforts readily available in a centralized manner, but that there are challenges to developing a framework for formal interagency information sharing because the agencies collect data on their efforts differently and the data are not always readily available.

However, our outreach to 12 U.S. embassies identified practices at the country level to facilitate information sharing among DOD, State, and USAID officials, and all cited specific examples of positive collaboration and coordination occurring within the embassies. For example, officials from the U.S. embassy in Bangladesh engage in weekly working group meetings in which DOD, State, and USAID officials plan, prioritize, and coordinate how to implement humanitarian assistance efforts in the country. Officials cited examples of cooperation between USAID and DOD to build cyclone shelters and provide medical relief to poor populations as instances where information sharing across the agencies has led to the effective coordination of efforts. U.S. embassy officials in

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### Agencies Use Different Terminology to Describe Similar Efforts

Kenya said that as a result of the information sharing that occurs during their interagency working group meetings, they were able to ensure that DOD and USAID did not duplicate each others' efforts to sponsor exchanges among religious figures in Kenya. However, there may also be information-sharing challenges at the embassy level. For example, officials from the U.S. embassy in Indonesia cited several challenges to interagency collaboration, including the lack of formalized coordination and information-sharing mechanisms.

Officials from DOD, State, and USAID told us that a basic challenge affecting their ability to share information is that the agencies use different terminology to describe similar assistance efforts. To facilitate collaboration, agencies need to address the compatibility of standards, policies, procedures, and data systems that will be used in the collaborative efforts. Collaborating agencies may need to find common ground while still satisfying their respective operating needs.<sup>47</sup> Yet the use of different terminology among federal agencies as well as nongovernmental organizations can hinder communication and can be especially challenging with the frequent rotation of personnel. For example, according to DOD officials, DOD uses the term humanitarian assistance to describe its strategically planned assistance, such as OHDACA-funded and HCA efforts. DOD also conducts foreign humanitarian assistance to relieve or reduce the results of natural or man-made disasters or endemic conditions. By contrast, USAID and State refer to immediate, life-saving relief as "humanitarian assistance" but other capacity building efforts as "development assistance." According to State, the international community—including nongovernmental organizations, national governments, the United Nations, and other international organizations—generally use the same terminology as USAID and State when referring to their assistance efforts.

DOD officials explained that the terminology they use to describe their efforts is derived from their legislative authority to perform humanitarian assistance, and DOD and USAID officials said that DOD uses "humanitarian assistance" rather than "development assistance" to ensure that the department is not perceived as performing development efforts that are outside of its legislatively prescribed areas of responsibility. In

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<sup>47</sup>GAO-06-15.

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addition, officials from DOD, State, and USAID said they use different terminology to refer to similar efforts, in part because they do not have the same goals or funding sources for their efforts. However, officials from all three agencies agreed that this differing terminology is an obstacle to the effective sharing of information. For example, DOD officials who were engaged in implementing some of DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts told us that differences in terminology can create challenges in understanding the scope and nature of each others' efforts. State officials said that the differing terminology creates challenges to setting goals or objectives when planning with each other. USAID officials said that an interagency working group was formed a few years ago to try to develop a common terminology, but the task proved too difficult and the group dissolved. Several officials agreed that having a better understanding of other agencies' terminology for assistance efforts would facilitate information sharing or collaboration across the agencies.

Without guidance to understand each others' terminology and a framework to effectively share information, the agencies do not have full visibility over each others' assistance efforts, which could lead to "stove-piped" planning, uninformed budgetary decisions, and a fragmented approach to the U.S. government's humanitarian and development assistance efforts.

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### **DOD Has Military Goals for Humanitarian Assistance, but Potential for Overlap Exists with State and USAID in Four Key Areas**

DOD conducts humanitarian assistance efforts to advance U.S. military interests, but performs efforts similar to those of State/USAID. Without full visibility over each others' efforts, the potential for unnecessary overlap may exist.<sup>48</sup>

### **DOD Has Several Goals for Humanitarian Assistance**

DOD generally conducts humanitarian assistance efforts through its OHDACA and HCA programs to advance U.S. military interests, and its efforts can primarily be grouped into four sectors of assistance: health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation. DOD's humanitarian

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<sup>48</sup>For the purposes of our review, we are combining the activities performed by State and USAID because while USAID performs a significant amount of foreign assistance activities, it performs them in close coordination with State and some projects are funded by State.

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assistance efforts are aimed at improving DOD visibility, access, and influence while building and/or reinforcing security and stability in a host nation or region; providing disaster mitigation training and/or bolstering host nation capacity to avert humanitarian crises and response to disasters; and generating collaborative relationships with a host nation's civil society as well as positive public relations and goodwill toward DOD. DOD's combatant commands identified additional goals for the humanitarian assistance program. For example, Africa Command stated that by improving the living conditions of local populations, some humanitarian assistance programs may help in countering terrorists or violent extremist organizations. European and Southern Command officials stated that a primary goal of their humanitarian assistance programs is to gain access to certain areas in order to engage with local governments, militaries, and populations in support of U.S. strategic objectives. Central Command officials said that a benefit of performing humanitarian assistance is that in addition to building the capacity of a foreign nation, the efforts can also build trust and confidence of the local populations in their government. One of the primary goals of DOD's HCA program is to promote operational readiness skills of U.S. servicemembers, along with improving basic economic and social needs of foreign nations.

In comparison, State and USAID, as the lead agencies for foreign relations and development, respectively, generally perform similar development assistance efforts as DOD, but on a much larger scale to benefit foreign nations and advance development goals. For example, to further its diplomatic mission, State provides assistance to build and sustain more democratic, secure, and prosperous foreign nations that respond to the needs of their people. State's efforts address a wide range of foreign policy issues, including those related to climate change, counterterrorism, democracy and human rights, economics, energy security, food security, health, narcotics, trafficking in persons, and women's issues. USAID, to further its development mission, provides economic, development, and disaster response assistance around the world in support of U.S. foreign policy and development goals. USAID provides assistance in areas such as agriculture, democracy and governance, economic growth and trade, the environment, education and training, global health, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response. Overall, State and USAID obligated almost \$50 billion to certain

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## DOD's Efforts Could Potentially Overlap with Those of State/USAID

development assistance efforts outside of Iraq and Afghanistan from fiscal years 2005 through 2010.<sup>49</sup>

Although the agencies have different reasons for conducting their humanitarian assistance or development efforts, they perform similar efforts in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation, and without full visibility over each others' efforts, there is the potential for some overlap (see fig. 7).<sup>50</sup> Overlap in efforts may be appropriate in some instances, especially if agencies can leverage each others' efforts. In other instances, overlap may be unintended, may be unnecessary, or may represent an inefficient use of U.S. government resources. For example, USAID officials said that the agencies' having differing goals for assistance can create foreign policy challenges in sending a clear and coherent message to the country receiving assistance.

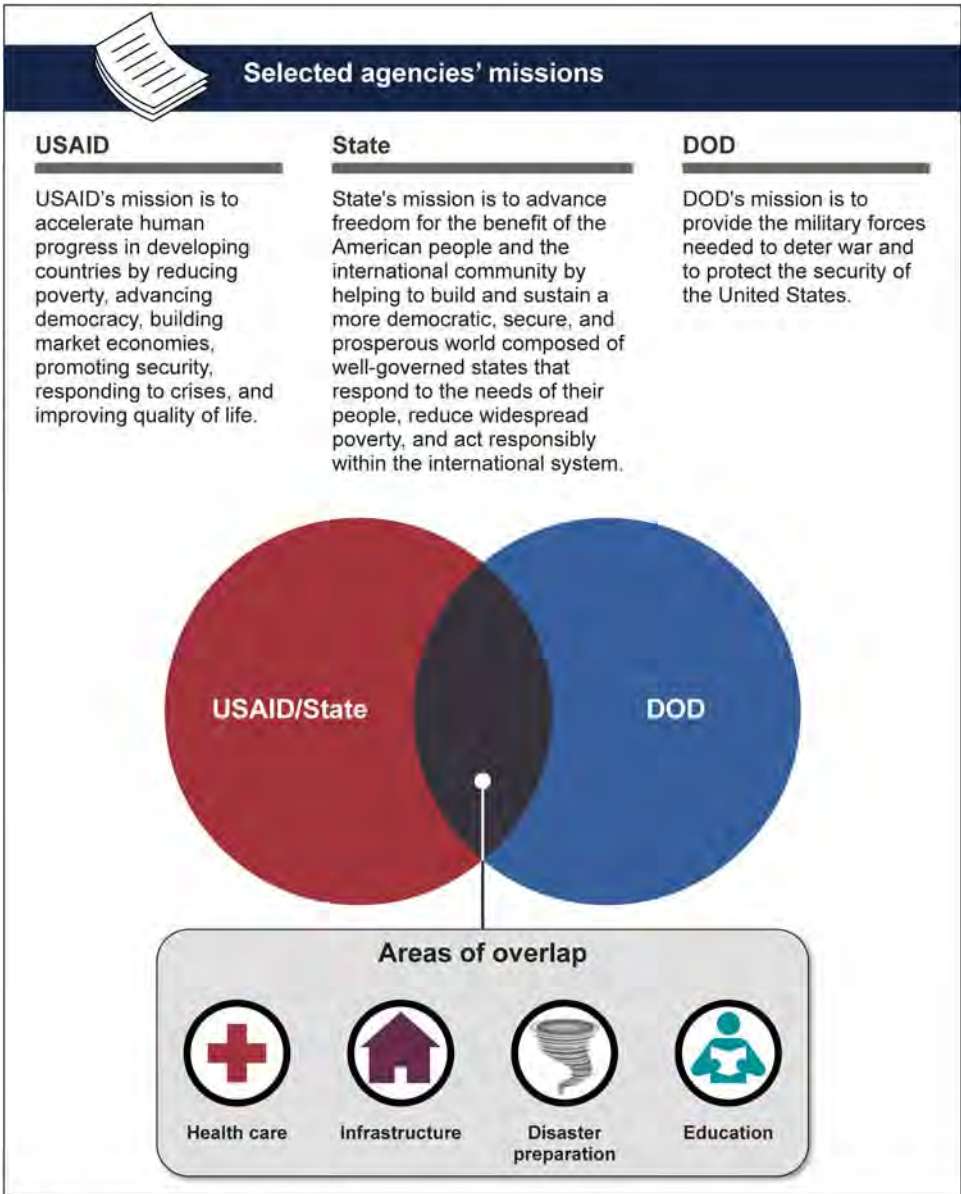
Our review of DOD's humanitarian assistance projects from 2005 through 2010 revealed that DOD and State/USAID are engaging in similar efforts within the four sectors. For example, DOD and State/USAID are performing similar education projects by building schools and supplying school supplies, and they are both improving health care by training medical personnel, building hospitals, and providing medical supplies and vaccinations. DOD and State/USAID are also performing similar infrastructure projects, such as drilling wells and constructing sanitation facilities, and similar disaster preparation projects by training first responders and helping communities establish plans to respond to natural disasters.

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<sup>49</sup>USAID officials identified the following development assistance accounts as comparable to DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts: the Economic Support Fund account; the Development Assistance account; Assistance for Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia; the Global Health and Child Survival account; and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance funds for preparedness and disaster risk reduction.

<sup>50</sup>It is important to note the distinction between overlap and duplication. While we found that the potential for overlap exists—that is, the agencies are performing similar types of efforts, sometimes in the same geographic areas—we did not find examples of actual duplication of specific projects conducted by DOD and State/USAID. However, State and USAID officials cited past instances of apparent duplication, such as DOD drilling water wells or building schools and clinics near the same areas in which USAID was performing similar services.

**Figure 7: Potential for Agency Overlap in Some Peacetime Humanitarian and Development Assistance Efforts**



Source: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data.

Notes: Graphic does not represent a numerical calculation.

For the purposes of our analysis, we defined health care efforts as providing medical care, assistance, and education on basic health care issues, building hospitals and clinics, or providing medical equipment; education efforts as training teachers, providing school supplies, or building



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educational facilities; infrastructure efforts as drilling wells and building roads, bridges, or rudimentary structures; and disaster preparation efforts as helping foreign nations plan for, prepare for, and respond to natural disasters.

We also found several examples of overlap in the types of efforts conducted by DOD and USAID within specific countries. For example, in Haiti, both USAID and DOD have performed efforts to improve disaster response preparation: USAID has worked with the Haitian government to improve early warning systems and develop comprehensive plans to prepare and respond to disasters, and DOD has developed an earthquake preparedness program for internally displaced Haitians. DOD has also performed disaster preparation efforts in Indonesia, where USAID is developing disaster risk reduction programs to support U.S. government climate change goals in the country. Officials from the U.S. embassy in Indonesia stated that the efforts between DOD and USAID on their disaster management efforts will need to be well coordinated to prevent duplication because there is not currently a formal method for the agencies to coordinate and communicate about these efforts. In Yemen, USAID has renovated health clinics and provided medical supplies to support pre- and postnatal care and other basic health care services, while DOD has used mobile health care clinics to provide basic medical care to rural populations (see fig. 8). In addition, both DOD and USAID have built schools and education facilities in Azerbaijan and have worked to upgrade and rehabilitate water wells in Pakistan.

Figure 8: Similar USAID and DOD Health Efforts in Yemen



Sources: USAID and DOD.

Officials from DOD, State, USAID, and nongovernmental organizations identified some areas where they believed that DOD is well suited to provide foreign assistance, such as providing military-to-military assistance to foreign militaries or helping foreign nations respond to natural disasters in their countries. For example, DOD provides military-to-military support by educating foreign militaries on HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention and training them in disaster response techniques. Officials from State, USAID, and nongovernmental organizations also stated that DOD's greater resources, personnel, and logistics support capabilities can be helpful when responding to a disaster. In addition, State and nongovernmental organization officials said that with its greater resources and personnel, DOD could help to fill gaps in areas not met by State and USAID efforts because of differences in the agencies' capacities. For example, nongovernmental organization officials said that DOD's greater capacity can be beneficial when undertaking large infrastructure projects, such as constructing roads and bridges. An official from State cited similar benefits, stating that DOD can be helpful when civilian capacity is overwhelmed or when rapid infrastructure projects are necessary to repair roads and bridges, which would then help facilitate civilian relief efforts. USAID officials also said that DOD can play an

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Potential Negative Effects  
Heighten Concern about DOD's  
Efforts

important role in supporting USAID's development work by providing security for USAID staff in hostile environments, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, where USAID staff are unable to move as freely.

DOD has recognized that, in the past, mistakes have occurred within its humanitarian assistance programs, and DOD officials said they have tried to incorporate lessons learned into the programs' management. However, officials from State, USAID, and nongovernmental organizations cited a number of potential negative consequences that could result from DOD performing humanitarian assistance efforts. Officials from DOD, State, and USAID said that some DOD personnel may lack expertise and education on performing development assistance-type work in foreign nations.<sup>51</sup> Officials from USAID and State also said that because of DOD's military goals for humanitarian assistance efforts, the department may view its efforts from a more short-term, security-oriented perspective, as compared with the long-term, development-oriented perspective generally taken by civilian agencies. For example, the officials said that DOD may not fully consider the potential political or social implications of performing humanitarian assistance projects in a country, which could lead to unintended consequences or misused resources. A State official explained that foreign assistance is often provided to fragile communities with complex dynamics, and even seemingly small projects, such as distributing soccer balls or candy, can have consequences, such as neighboring villages interpreting the U.S. government as favoring one community over another. Officials cited a few examples where negative effects had occurred because of DOD projects:

- European Command officials said that DOD had built a hospice care center for HIV/AIDS patients in a town in the Ukraine that was received negatively based on the local community's perspective on the disease. Officials said that because these cultural sensitivities were not considered, the local community was not supportive of the project and European Command did not achieve the intended goal of gaining access and influence in the Ukraine.
- U.S. embassy officials in Uganda said that DOD personnel had built a library but did not ensure staffing of a librarian or provide books and

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<sup>51</sup>We have previously reported that DOD personnel lack expertise in performing development assistance-type work in foreign nations. See GAO, *Defense Management: Improved Planning, Training, and Interagency Collaboration Could Strengthen DOD's Efforts in Africa*, [GAO-10-794](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 28, 2010), and [GAO-10-504](#).

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bookshelves. The library sat empty for a year before USAID renovated the structure as a war memorial and research center for victims of the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency.

- U.S. embassy officials in Lebanon described an incident in which DOD officials did not coordinate with USAID on a school renovation project and demolished a portion of the school's roof that had previously been built by USAID.

USAID and nongovernmental organization officials also stated that DOD's involvement in humanitarian assistance efforts to advance military interests like counterterrorism or global security can cause distrust among the communities receiving assistance. Moreover, officials from several nongovernmental organizations expressed concern about experiencing distrust from the local population or having their safety jeopardized when DOD personnel perform humanitarian assistance efforts. Furthermore, State, USAID, and nongovernmental organization officials stated that DOD's projects may not be well sustained because they may not be monitored and evaluated once they are completed. We have previously reported on similar concerns about the sustainability of USAID's projects because of challenges in monitoring and evaluating some of their development projects.<sup>52</sup>

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## DOD's Role in Humanitarian Assistance May Need Reexamination

GAO is required to identify federal agencies, programs, and initiatives that may have duplicative goals or activities in order to assist Congress as it reexamines federal priorities and policy decisions in a fiscally-constrained environment. The current legislation guiding DOD's OHDACA program was originally enacted in the early 1990s and has been amended several times, most recently in 2003, but does not provide detailed guidance on DOD's role in providing humanitarian assistance. The legislation allows DOD to, among other things, use funds authorized for humanitarian assistance to provide transportation of humanitarian relief and for other humanitarian purposes worldwide. DOD's various humanitarian assistance efforts currently performed under the OHDACA program are carried out under this authorization. Moreover, DOD's OHDACA program has grown by about 60 percent from fiscal years 2005 through 2010 even though it faces several management issues cited in this report. DOD's *Quadrennial Defense Review* states that while DOD can and should have

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<sup>52</sup>[GAO-10-368](#).

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the expertise and capacity to perform capacity-building activities in foreign nations, civilian leadership of humanitarian assistance, development, and governance is essential.<sup>53</sup> State officials expressed concern that DOD's involvement in foreign assistance has increased significantly, especially with its involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, officials from DOD, State, and USAID all suggested that Congress provide additional clarification on the roles, missions, and responsibilities of the agencies involved in humanitarian and development assistance.

In some cases, DOD has recognized that some humanitarian assistance-type projects may be better performed by civilian agencies. For example, a Southern Command official stated that the command suggested a reduction in its 2011 OHDACA funding for its humanitarian assistance program because the Combatant Commander had perceived that certain routine humanitarian assistance efforts (such as building schools and hospitals) would be better performed by USAID. The Southern Command Commander instead wanted to focus the command's humanitarian assistance efforts and funds on helping foreign nations respond to natural disasters. In addition, USAID officials cited examples in which DOD transferred funding to USAID to perform humanitarian assistance efforts. For example, in Sri Lanka in fiscal years 2008 and 2009, DOD transferred OHDACA funding to USAID to build schools, hospitals, and clinics; and in Morocco, USAID officials said that, in fiscal year 2009, DOD transferred funding to USAID when the agencies learned that they were performing similar infrastructure projects in the country.

While there is limited guidance on DOD's role in performing humanitarian assistance activities, the U.S. government has clearly identified the importance of development to achieving the nation's strategic goals and the agencies responsible for development activities. For example, the *Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development* highlights the importance of development activities toward achieving U.S. national security interests and expresses a commitment to rebuilding USAID as the lead U.S. agency for development.<sup>54</sup> *The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* further states that State and USAID are called upon to lead and advance U.S. foreign policy objectives (as set forth in the

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<sup>53</sup>Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (February 2010).

<sup>54</sup>The White House, *Fact Sheet on U.S. Global Development Policy* (Washington D.C.: Sept. 22, 2010).

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*National Security Strategy and the Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development*) through diplomacy and development, with USAID serving as the lead agency for development.<sup>55</sup> While USAID is described as the lead agency for development assistance, USAID planning officials told us that in their view they do not have the ability to control or monitor DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts. Without visibility or oversight over DOD's humanitarian assistance projects, it can be difficult to determine whether DOD's projects necessarily or unnecessarily overlap with those of the other agencies and whether DOD's projects are achieving their desired goals. Given several factors—the fiscally-constrained environment, the President's recently expressed commitment to rebuilding USAID as the lead U.S. development agency, and the similarity of assistance efforts being performed by DOD, State, and USAID—DOD and the other agencies involved in foreign assistance could benefit from additional direction from Congress on DOD's role in performing humanitarian assistance in peacetime environments. Such additional direction could help maximize the use of resources and reduce the potential for the unnecessary overlap of efforts.

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## Conclusions

At a time of severe budget challenges, improved management and an examination of the U.S. military's expanding role in providing humanitarian assistance outside of wartime or disaster environments are warranted. DOD aligns its two main peacetime humanitarian assistance programs, OHDACA and HCA, with its departmental strategic goals and coordinates projects with USAID or State. However, until DOD addresses several management weaknesses—such as inaccurate project information, absent project evaluations, and limited departmental guidance—it cannot readily inform the Congress or the U.S. taxpayer as to whether its humanitarian assistance efforts represent the most efficient and effective use of resources. Moreover, employing a risk-based approach to project evaluations and consistently measuring the long-term effects of its humanitarian assistance efforts could help DOD determine whether its efforts are achieving their goals and having lasting benefits, or whether changes are needed in the planning or implementation of its projects.

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<sup>55</sup>Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, *Leading Through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (2010).

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On a broader level, while the funding devoted to DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts outside of Iraq and Afghanistan is small relative to State's and USAID's larger-scale development programs, DOD has nonetheless spent hundreds of millions of dollars over the past few years on efforts that could potentially overlap with those conducted by the civilian agencies. As the boundaries continue to blur between U.S. diplomacy, development, and defense efforts, interagency information sharing becomes paramount. Working together to develop a common terminology and framework to share information on their respective humanitarian and development assistance efforts could provide DOD, State, and USAID with an increased understanding of each others' programs as well as improved transparency, enhanced interagency planning, and a more efficient use of U.S. tax dollars for foreign assistance. Notwithstanding the importance of improving interagency communication, potential for overlap among some DOD efforts and those of State and USAID is still likely to exist even with the establishment of a framework to readily share information. In some cases, overlap among the agencies' efforts may be appropriate. However, given the current budget climate and concerted efforts by the administration and Congress to reduce government spending, a congressional examination of the legislation governing DOD's OHDACA program could help clarify the intended role of DOD in performing humanitarian assistance, taking into account the efforts of the civilian agencies and budgetary circumstances.

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## Matter for Congressional Consideration

As part of an examination of multiple programs and government functions at a time of fiscal constraint, and to help reduce the potential for overlap among agencies' efforts, Congress should consider the role of DOD in conducting humanitarian assistance efforts and consider amending the legislation that supports the OHDACA program to more specifically define DOD's role in humanitarian assistance, taking into account the roles and similar types of efforts performed by the civilian agencies. If Congress chooses to modify the legislation, Congress may wish to consider clarifying the different terminology used by DOD, other federal agencies, and the international community regarding such efforts.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

To improve the management of DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts and ensure that projects are having lasting, beneficial effects, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense take the following five actions:

- Direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to help improve consistency in program implementation by issuing a departmental

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instruction and updating accompanying guidance on DOD's OHDACA humanitarian assistance program. In issuing the updated guidance, the department may wish to consider further clarifying the use of OHDACA funds for specific project evaluation purposes.

- Direct the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency to take the following actions:
  - Require that the combatant commands and other DOD users of the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database provide complete and timely updates to OHDACA humanitarian assistance project information within the system.
  - Employ a risk-based approach to review and modify project evaluation requirements for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program to measure the long-term effects of humanitarian assistance projects, and take steps to ensure compliance with the requirements.
- Direct the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to take the following actions:
  - Require that the combatant commands and other DOD users of the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database provide complete and timely updates to HCA project information within the system.
  - Employ a risk-based approach to review and modify project evaluation requirements for the HCA program to measure the long-term effects of projects and take steps to ensure compliance with the requirements.

To improve transparency and oversight and to maximize the benefits derived from U.S. government resources devoted to humanitarian and development assistance efforts, we recommend that the Secretaries of Defense and State and the Administrator of USAID take the following two actions:

- Develop a framework to formalize interagency information sharing on humanitarian/development assistance efforts, such as a common database. Such a framework could involve selecting an existing initiative, such as the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, to be used by all agencies for their assistance efforts or taking steps to facilitate interoperability among the agencies' existing independent mechanisms.



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- Collaborate to develop guidance that provides a common understanding of the terminology used by DOD, State, and USAID related to their humanitarian and development assistance efforts.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to DOD, State, USAID, the Office of Management and Budget, and the National Security Staff for review and comment. DOD partially agreed with our recommendations and cited some actions that it was taking to address the issues we identified in this report. State and USAID agreed with the two recommendations addressed to State, USAID, and DOD to improve interagency transparency and oversight, and also cited some actions that the three agencies were taking to address these concerns. The National Security Staff did not provide comments. DOD's comments are reprinted in appendix X, State's comments are reprinted in appendix XI, and USAID's comments are reprinted in appendix XII. Technical comments were provided separately by DOD, State, USAID, and the Office of Management and Budget and were incorporated as appropriate.

DOD partially agreed with our first recommendation that DOD issue a departmental instruction and update guidance on the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program to improve consistency in program implementation. The department said that it is currently in the process of updating the policy guidance for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, with the intent to use this guidance as the foundation for a DOD instruction on humanitarian assistance. DOD further stated that the updated guidance will clarify current guidance requiring the combatant commands to assess the performance and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance projects in meeting their intended objectives. We note in our report that DOD is in the process of reexamining the existing policy guidance for its humanitarian assistance projects, and agree that the updated guidance should serve as the foundation for a DOD instruction to provide consistency in program implementation, clearly distinguish the processes and guidelines for humanitarian assistance projects, and identify the roles and functions of relevant stakeholders and agencies. However, the department is unclear when the guidance will be finalized and when a formal DOD instruction will be developed or issued. Without clear guidance on how the combatant commands should implement and evaluate the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, there will likely continue to be confusion and inconsistency in the program's execution. Moreover, the department's response does not clearly state whether the updated guidance will clarify the ability to use OHDACA funds to conduct project evaluations, which was a source of confusion identified by the

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combatant commands and DOD officials. The department also noted in its response that we had addressed the recommendation to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations in our draft report but that this official does not issue departmental instructions. We agree with DOD's comment and have updated our report to state that the Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to issue the departmental instruction and accompanying program guidance.

DOD partially agreed with our second recommendation that the combatant commands and other DOD users be required to provide complete and timely updates on OHDACA humanitarian assistance projects in the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database. The department stated that it recognizes that providing complete and timely updates to its database is a concern, and that the Defense Security Cooperation Agency has begun developing a second version of the database to address these deficiencies for data beginning in fiscal year 2012. The department also stated that it believes the new database, the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System 2.0, will address the concern of ensuring complete and timely updates, and that there is no need to direct the Defense Security Cooperation Agency to implement a requirement for users to update the database. The department further noted that it intends to utilize the capabilities of the new Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System to tie humanitarian assistance funding for the combatant commands and other DOD users to the completion of timely information in the system. Our report acknowledges that the Defense Security Cooperation Agency is developing a new version of the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System but noted that many of the improvements to the system are still under development and unproven at this time. We agree that many of the planned improvements for the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System, such as e-mail alerts to users to update evaluations and simplifying the ease of using the database, could make for a more complete management and reporting system. Our review also states that requiring complete data on previous projects could be included as part of the process for approving new projects to ensure that combatant commands and DOD users are updating information about their humanitarian assistance projects. However, we remain concerned that, without explicit guidance from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency—the OHDACA program manager—or a set time frame for complete data on humanitarian assistance projects to be entered into the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System, the

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department may continue to program and budget for new efforts without complete and accurate information about projects' costs, status, and effects.

DOD also partially agreed with our third recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct the Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency to employ a risk-based approach to review and modify project evaluation requirements for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program to measure the long-term effects of humanitarian assistance projects and to take steps to ensure compliance with the project evaluation requirements. In its response, the department stated that it is in the process of refining its project evaluation requirements, and current efforts include identifying ways to make project evaluations less burdensome to encourage completion, establishing methods to ensure compliance with evaluation requirements, and refining data collection methods to make project evaluations more useful. According to DOD, key components of these efforts are expected to be completed by the third and fourth quarters of fiscal year 2012. The department also noted that given the lack of project evaluation data currently available, it may take some time to formulate a complete and reliable risk-based approach to project evaluation requirements, and more data must first be collected. We agree that the efforts identified by DOD are necessary to ensure compliance with project evaluation requirements and accurately measure and monitor the long-term effects of the department's humanitarian assistance projects. Furthermore, we understand that implementing a comprehensive risk-based approach may take some time, and as our report noted, it will be important for the department to consider changes to its current evaluation process to more strategically allocate resources, as it may be inefficient to evaluate some lower-cost humanitarian assistance projects. We maintain that until the department reviews and updates its project evaluation requirements, and ensures compliance with the requirements, it will be unable to determine whether its efforts are achieving their goals, or whether the projects are an effective use of DOD's resources in an increasingly constrained fiscal environment.

DOD agreed with our fourth recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to require the combatant commands and other DOD users to provide complete and timely updates on HCA projects in the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database. The department stated that since taking responsibility for the HCA program in January 2011, the Joint Staff has begun making improvements to address management issues identified in our review. Its response states that the release of the

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upgraded version of DOD's Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database in December 2011 standardizes input for project reviews and improves communication and coordination within DOD and across other agencies. As noted in our review, there are significant differences between the HCA data reported in the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System and the data reported to Congress, despite the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System being used by each of the combatant commands to record information on its HCA projects. Moreover, we reported that DOD officials were uncertain where the combatant commands obtained the information on HCA projects that was reported to Congress. While upgrades to the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System represent a positive step toward improving communication and coordination over the HCA program, until the department establishes and enforces requirements for the combatant commands to enter complete data on their HCA projects in the database, the department risks not having the information necessary to plan its projects and may continue to provide incomplete information to Congress on its HCA activities.

DOD also agreed with our fifth recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to employ a risk-based approach to review and modify project evaluation requirements for the HCA program to measure the long-term effects of projects and to take steps to ensure compliance with the project evaluation requirements. The department noted that the Joint Staff has made improvements in the management of the HCA program, including addressing data gaps and coordinating with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations to revise the HCA guidance. In addition, the department stated that the Joint Staff has established monthly teleconferences with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and the combatant commands to clarify policy guidance and discuss best practices. We noted these monthly teleconferences in our report, as well as the Joint Staff's intention to begin reviewing project evaluations for each combatant command starting in February 2012 as positive steps. The department also stated that in January 2012 the Joint Staff would begin developing an updated version of the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System for HCA projects, and additional guidance for assessing HCA projects, to be informed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency's concurrent risk-based approach for evaluating project effectiveness. The department's response also notes that the Global Theater Security Cooperation

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Management Information System may provide a solution to the problems of reporting and tracking HCA projects; however, according to DOD officials, this system is still under development with no identified time frame for implementation. We state in our report that the lack of consistent HCA project evaluations is a long-standing problem that will require additional guidance and enforcement by the Joint Staff to ensure that HCA projects are effective at both training military personnel and contributing to U.S. foreign policy objectives. While progress is being made to establish assessment guidance and begin consistently reviewing whether the combatant commands have completed required project evaluations, these actions alone may not result in an increased number of completed evaluations. Until there is clear guidance and enforcement of project evaluation requirements, the department will continue to lack information about the long-term effects of its HCA projects, and the Joint Staff and Congress will be challenged to provide oversight to determine whether the program is meeting its intended goals and represents an effective use of resources.

DOD, State, and USAID agreed with our sixth recommendation that the three agencies develop a framework to formalize interagency information sharing, such as using a common database, for humanitarian and development assistance efforts. DOD, State, and USAID noted that the agencies have taken steps to improve information sharing across the agencies, which we cite in our report, and that all three agencies will continue to explore additional venues to coordinate their efforts. DOD stated that it will engage with State and USAID to determine what information-sharing mechanisms could be used to enhance information sharing, and noted that it has already taken some steps to do so by providing State and USAID with access to DOD's Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database. They also noted that DOD's database has a framework in place to be able to share data with systems such as the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, and that attributes in the Foreign Assistance Dashboard could be adopted in the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System to facilitate information sharing. While our report notes that DOD's database is not currently interoperable with State and USAID's databases, it is encouraging that there are opportunities for the agencies to restructure their systems to facilitate information sharing as our report recommends. State's response noted that it is currently in discussions with DOD and USAID about broadening the Foreign Assistance Dashboard to include DOD's efforts, and that it is working on developing country-specific strategic plans to facilitate coordination and planning across the agencies. We note in our report that information sharing, planning, and coordination

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appear to work well at the country level, but a standardized approach to information sharing across the agencies is needed for full visibility over each others' humanitarian and development assistance efforts. USAID stated that it will continue to explore information-sharing opportunities with DOD and State, but said that there are challenges to sharing information because each agency has separate databases that are not integrated, a challenge we recognize in our report. Our report underscores that the development of a framework to formalize interagency information sharing, in the form of a common, interoperable database, is necessary to improve coordination of each of the agencies' programs, as well as to prevent overlap and an inefficient use of resources.

DOD, State, and USAID also agreed with our seventh recommendation that the three agencies collaborate to develop guidance that provides a common understanding of the different terminology used by DOD, State, and USAID to describe their humanitarian and development assistance efforts. DOD stated that although the agencies use different terminology because of differences in their authorities and mission sets, that a better understanding of the terms the agencies use would help to facilitate coordination on similar types of projects. DOD further stated that it will work with State and USAID to identify a scope and time frame for issuing guidance on a common terminology. We state in our report that DOD's terminology is derived from DOD's legislative authority to perform humanitarian assistance, and officials from DOD, State, and USAID agreed that differences in the agencies' terminology are an obstacle to basic communication and information sharing. For example, State noted in its technical comments that while DOD uses different terminology to ensure that it is not perceived as performing development efforts that are outside of its legislative authority, DOD's activities do not conform with the definition of humanitarian assistance used by State, USAID, and the international community, and this can be a barrier to cooperation across the agencies. USAID noted that development and humanitarian assistance are the domain of the civilian authorities, with a limited role for DOD where its unique capabilities are needed. USAID stated that clarification of distinct objectives, conditions, and terms of engagement of civilians and military in what is called humanitarian assistance by both DOD and USAID would be helpful, and new terminology would also help distinguish the distinct goals and roles and responsibilities. State and USAID both stated that the agencies are working toward improving collaboration and coordination across the agencies through the 3D Planning Group, and that this group could potentially work to develop guidance on a common set of terminology. We recognize efforts of the 3D

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Planning Group in our report, but note that officials from the group said it is an ad hoc effort that is not a high priority for the agencies. Our report highlights that the use of different terminology can hinder communication across the agencies, and we maintain that without guidance that promotes a better understanding of each others' terminology, the agencies are at risk of taking a fragmented approach to their humanitarian and development assistance efforts.

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We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3489 or [pendletonj@gao.gov](mailto:pendletonj@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix XIII.



John H. Pendleton  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

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*List of Committees*

The Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
The Honorable John McCain  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate

The Honorable John Kerry  
Chairman  
The Honorable Richard G. Lugar  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon  
Chairman  
The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Chairman  
The Honorable Howard L. Berman  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives



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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

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To conduct our work, we reviewed Department of Defense (DOD) guidance, including the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review*; DOD guidance on the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) humanitarian assistance and Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) programs; and the combatant commands' theater campaign plans and other command guidance. We also reviewed relevant legislation authorizing the OHDACA and HCA programs found in sections 2561 and 401 of Title 10 of the United States Code, respectively. We chose to focus on these two key DOD humanitarian assistance programs based on discussions with officials at the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations. During the course of our review, we contacted officials at a wide range of agencies and offices, including officials at 12 U.S. embassies. Our selection of embassies consisted of 2 embassies located with each combatant command's geographical area of responsibility that resided in countries with the largest amounts of OHDACA-funded humanitarian assistance projects from fiscal years 2005 through 2010. We decided to limit the scope of our review of other federal offices to the Department of State (State) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) because DOD guidance for its OHDACA and HCA programs provides requirements for coordination with these agencies. We met with officials at the Department of Health and Human Services early during the review before making the decision to limit the scope to State and USAID.

To understand how much DOD had obligated for its OHDACA humanitarian assistance efforts, we analyzed data from DOD's Program Budget Automated System and determined these data to be sufficiently reliable for presenting obligations from fiscal years 2005 through 2010. To determine DOD's obligations for the HCA program, we used information from DOD's annual reports to Congress on the program for the same time period.<sup>1</sup> We limited our analysis to DOD's obligations in fiscal years 2005 through 2010 because DOD issued guidance in 2005 that emphasized the importance of stability operations, which include humanitarian assistance, and DOD officials also told us that data prior to fiscal year 2005 may not be reliable. We also included context information on other

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<sup>1</sup>DOD's fiscal year 2010 report to Congress was in draft form and had not been submitted to Congress at the time of our review.

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selected DOD military-to-military humanitarian assistance-type efforts that help improve the well-being of foreign populations, including HIV/AIDS efforts. We performed data reliability checks on the information DOD officials gathered from financial databases by requiring officials to complete questionnaires about data entry and quality control procedures. We determined that the data were reliable to present annual obligations for DOD humanitarian assistance for fiscal years 2005 through 2010.

To understand the strategic goals and assistance efforts of State and USAID, we reviewed guidance and documents from these agencies, including the fiscal years 2007-2012 State/USAID joint strategic plan; State's 2010 *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*; the *USAID Policy Framework 2011-2015*; several U.S. embassy mission resource strategic plans and country operational plans; State and USAID's evaluation policies for their programs; and USAID descriptions of programs within specific countries.<sup>2</sup> We also reviewed a fact sheet on the 2010 *Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development* and relevant legislation on foreign assistance. We met with State and USAID officials to identify funding accounts for development efforts similar to those performed by DOD, and obtained State and USAID obligations by funding account for fiscal years 2005 through 2010. We analyzed USAID's and State's obligations by account and fiscal year to identify these agencies' total spending on development assistance activities comparable to the humanitarian assistance projects performed by DOD.

To assess DOD's management of the OHDACA and HCA programs, we considered successful management practices, as identified in our prior work. Specifically, we identified critical management steps and practices that can help agencies to achieve success, including (1) aligning projects to strategic goals and establishing procedures and mechanisms, (2) coordinating with stakeholders, (3) collecting complete and accurate data, (4) measuring performance, and (5) developing policies to help achieve results. To determine the extent to which DOD aligned projects to strategic goals, established processes for its programs, coordinated with interagency stakeholders, and established guidance, we analyzed relevant documents and interviewed DOD, State, and USAID officials at the headquarters and combatant command levels. To assess DOD's

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<sup>2</sup>Each of USAID's country profiles, which are posted on [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov), provides an overview of the agency's programs in a particular country.

processes and guidance for the OHDACA and HCA programs, we reviewed relevant statutes; DOD directives, instructions, joint publications, and other guidance; and Defense Security Cooperation Agency and combatant command guidance, business rules, and other documentation pertaining to the OHDACA and HCA programs. To assess coordination of projects with stakeholders, we analyzed documentation, such as guidance, organizational charts, budgetary documents, and interagency memorandums of understanding, and other relevant documents, and determined the number of interagency personnel located at each of DOD's geographic combatant commands. In addition, we interviewed officials from many DOD offices involved in these two programs, such as the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Office of General Counsel, and each of DOD's six geographic combatant commands and its Special Operations Command, as well as officials from State and USAID at both the headquarters and combatant command levels, to obtain their perspectives on DOD's processes, guidance, and coordination in planning and implementing its humanitarian assistance efforts.

To evaluate DOD's information management of its humanitarian assistance projects, we analyzed reports from DOD's Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database of all OHDACA and HCA projects that were identified as completed in the database from fiscal years 2005 through 2010.<sup>3</sup> To determine the extent to which OHDACA project information was complete and accurate in the database, we reviewed a report of OHDACA projects that had been marked as completed, and noted that the number of projects listed for some combatant commands was small compared to what we had expected based on our discussions with DOD officials. We then compared the total amount of funding for OHDACA projects conducted by each combatant command in the reports of completed projects to the total obligation amounts that appeared in the program funding data provided by DOD officials and identified discrepancies. To determine the extent to which actual costs for OHDACA projects were recorded in DOD's database, we analyzed the reports of OHDACA projects that had been marked as completed in the database from fiscal years 2007 through

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<sup>3</sup>The reports provided by DOD included all projects that had a status of "completed" in the "team status" database field.

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2010.<sup>4</sup> We determined that actual cost information was present in the database if the actual cost field contained any value greater than \$1.<sup>5</sup> To determine the extent to which DOD had complete and accurate data about its HCA projects, we compared the total number of HCA projects that had been marked as completed in the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System HCA project reports to the total number of completed projects identified in DOD's HCA reports submitted annually to Congress in fiscal years 2007 through 2009.<sup>6</sup> Although we found that data on project status and cost were not sufficiently reliable for our report, we did determine that the data were reliable for the purposes of presenting examples of humanitarian assistance efforts conducted by DOD.

To assess the extent to which DOD conducted its required project evaluations, we analyzed a generalizable random sample of OHDACA projects. We began with the reports from DOD's Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database of projects from fiscal years 2005 through 2009 that were marked as funded by the combatant commands, because Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials said that this would provide a more comprehensive list of projects than the list of projects marked as completed. We then excluded from that all projects that recorded either an actual cost value of \$10,000 or less, or if no actual cost information was available, projects that had an estimated cost of \$10,000 or less in the database, because DOD guidance does not require a 1-year project evaluation for those projects. We also excluded projects that had a status of "canceled" by the combatant command in the database, because a Defense Security Cooperation Agency official told us it was likely that such projects had not been implemented and thus project evaluations would not have been conducted. Of the 579 projects that remained after these exclusions, we sampled 97 projects for review. Because different samples could have provided different estimates, we

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<sup>4</sup>Defense Security Cooperation Agency officials told us that the data for fiscal years 2005 and 2006 might not be reliable because they had been imported into the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System from a legacy system, so we excluded those 2 fiscal years from this analysis.

<sup>5</sup>We reviewed the "actual cost" database field in DOD's Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database for all OHDACA projects that had been marked with a status of "completed" in the "team status" database field.

<sup>6</sup>At the time of our review, DOD had not yet submitted an HCA report to Congress for fiscal year 2010, so that fiscal year was excluded from this analysis.

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expressed our confidence in the precision of our particular sample results as a 95 percent confidence interval. The margin of error for these estimates is no more than plus or minus 10 percentage points. This is the interval that would contain the actual population values for 95 percent of the samples that we could have drawn. Two analysts independently reviewed DOD's complete database files for these 97 projects to determine whether the 30-day and 1-year project evaluations were present. Because the database did not specifically identify whether a project evaluation was a 30-day or a 1-year evaluation, we exercised our judgment to categorize the assessments based on factors such as the nature of the information in the evaluation and the date the evaluation was completed. The two analysts compared their results, and all initial differences regarding the categorization of the assessments and their presence were discussed and reconciled. Because of concerns about the completeness and reliability of data in DOD's database of HCA project information, we did not generate and analyze a sample of projects from the database.

To analyze the extent to which DOD, State, and USAID have visibility over each others' assistance efforts to avoid duplication, unnecessary overlap, or fragmentation, we reviewed documentation related to various information-sharing initiatives and interviewed relevant officials from DOD, State, USAID, and the National Security Staff to discuss the initiatives and information-sharing challenges, including the use of differing terminology among the agencies to describe similar assistance efforts. To identify the potential for overlapping efforts among the agencies, we identified DOD's humanitarian assistance projects by sector—for example, health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation—from fiscal years 2005 through 2010 and examined information on State/USAID's development efforts within geographical regions and countries to determine if State/USAID had performed similar types of projects in the areas as DOD. For the purposes of our review, we combined the activities performed by State and USAID because while USAID performs a significant amount of foreign assistance activities, it performs them in close coordination with State and some projects are funded by State. To identify specific examples of overlap between DOD and USAID's efforts in the same country, we compared DOD's projects in a country to those performed by USAID in the same country, and found examples of similar activities being performed in the four sectors. We did not evaluate whether overlap would have positive or negative effects. We interviewed relevant officials from DOD, State, USAID, the Office of Management and Budget, the National Security Staff, and

nongovernmental agencies to identify potential benefits and consequences to DOD's humanitarian assistance program.

In addressing our objectives, we contacted officials representing a wide range of offices (see table 3).

**Table 3: List of Organizations Contacted**

<b>DOD</b>
<i>DOD offices/agencies</i>
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Defense Security Cooperation Agency
International Health Division
Joint Staff
National Guard Bureau
Naval Facilities Engineering Command
Naval Health Research Center
Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Financial Management and Comptroller
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Health Protection and Readiness <sup>a</sup>
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)
Pacific Command Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance
Walter Reed Army Institute of Research
<i>Combatant commands</i>
Africa Command
Central Command
European Command
Northern Command
Pacific Command
Southern Command
Special Operations Command
<b>State</b>
<i>Bureaus/offices</i>
Bureau of Political-Military Affairs
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance
Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator
<i>U.S. embassies</i>
Albania
Bahamas
Bangladesh
Haiti
Indonesia
Kenya
Kyrgyz Republic
Lebanon
Mexico
Moldova
Peru
Uganda
<b>USAID</b>
Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning
Office of Military Affairs
Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
Select regional bureaus
Senior development advisors stationed at various combatant commands
USAID/East Africa Mission - Djibouti
<b>Other U.S. government organizations</b>
National Security Staff
Office of Management and Budget
Department of Health and Human Services
<b>Nongovernment organizations</b>
InterAction <sup>b</sup>
Refugees International

Source: GAO.

<sup>a</sup>We contacted the International Health Division of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Health Protection and Readiness.

<sup>b</sup>InterAction is an alliance of U.S.-based international nongovernmental organizations with more than 190 members working in developing countries around the world. We met with InterAction representatives from six nongovernment organizations that engage in a variety of development assistance-type efforts globally.

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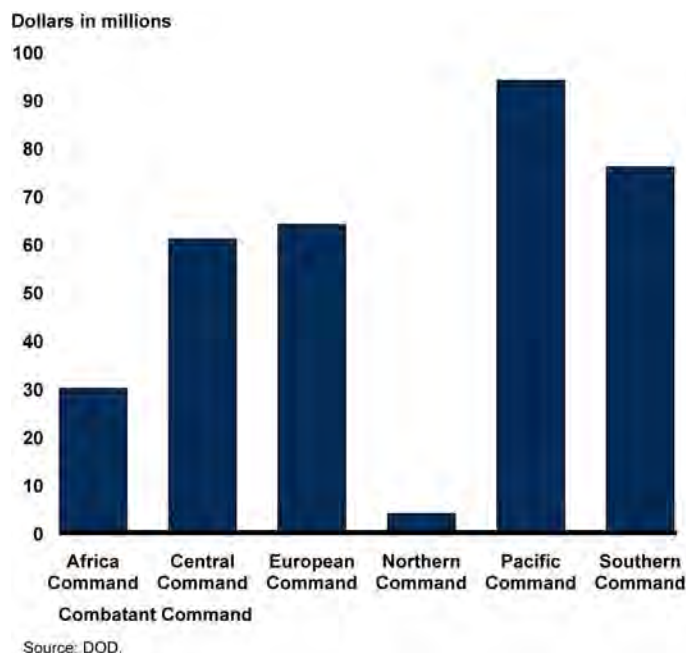
We conducted this performance audit from November 2010 through February 2012 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.



# Appendix II: DOD's Obligations for Humanitarian Assistance Efforts by Combatant Command

Figure 9 represents DOD's obligations by geographic combatant command for efforts under the OHDACA program from fiscal years 2005 through 2010. Over this 6-year period, DOD's Pacific and Southern Commands obligated the highest amounts, about \$93.8 million and \$75.8 million, respectively.

**Figure 9: DOD's OHDACA-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Obligations by Combatant Command for Fiscal Years 2005 through 2010**



Notes: Figures represent obligations for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, as distinguished from the broader OHDACA program. Figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars.

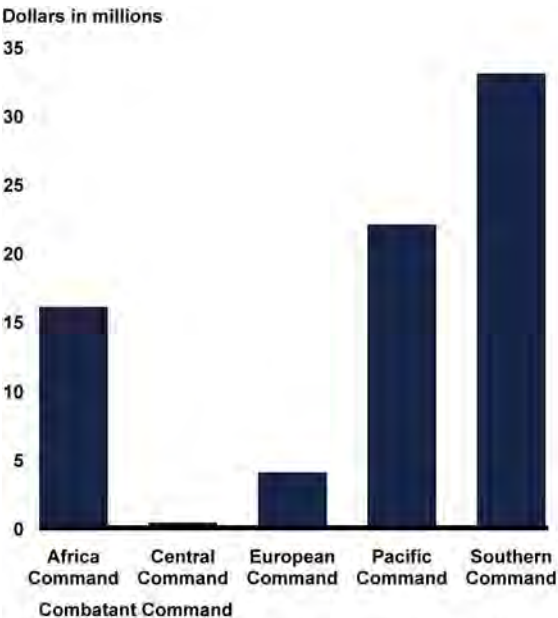
Combatant commands and their corresponding areas of responsibility are identified as follows: U.S. Africa Command (Africa); U.S. Central Command (Middle East and Egypt); U.S. European Command (Europe and Israel); U.S. Northern Command (North America and the Bahamas); U.S. Pacific Command (Asia and the Pacific region); and U.S. Southern Command (Central America, South America, and the Caribbean).

U.S. Africa Command was not fully operational until 2008, so U.S. Africa Command's obligations for the OHDACA-funded humanitarian assistance program are from fiscal years 2008 through 2010. Also, obligations for U.S. Central Command do not include funding to Iraq and Afghanistan with the exception of one project performed in Afghanistan, which DOD recorded at a cost of \$27,000.

Figure 10 represents DOD's obligations for HCA projects conducted within its geographic combatant commands' areas of responsibility from fiscal years 2005 through 2010. Over this 6-year period, obligations were

the highest for HCA projects in DOD's Southern and Pacific Commands' geographical areas, about \$32.5 million and \$21.9 million, respectively.

**Figure 10: DOD's Humanitarian and Civic Assistance Obligations for Projects Conducted within the Combatant Commands' Geographic Areas for Fiscal Years 2005 through 2010**



Sources: DOD's reports to Congress on HCA activities, fiscal years 2005 through 2009, and a draft version of DOD's fiscal year 2010 report to Congress on HCA activities, which had not been submitted to Congress at the time of our review.

Notes: Figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars.

Combatant commands and their corresponding areas of responsibility are identified as follows: U.S. Africa Command (Africa); U.S. Central Command (Middle East and Egypt); U.S. European Command (Europe and Israel); U.S. Pacific Command (Asia and the Pacific region); and U.S. Southern Command (Central America, South America, and the Caribbean). U.S. Northern Command (North America and the Bahamas) does not engage in humanitarian and civic assistance efforts.

U.S. Africa Command was not fully operational until 2008. Dollar amounts in fig. 10 include projects performed in Africa from fiscal years 2005 through fiscal years 2010, even though projects were managed by other combatant commands in Africa prior to fiscal year 2008. Also, obligations for U.S. Central Command do not include funding for efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

# Appendix III: Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in U.S. Africa Command's Area of Responsibility

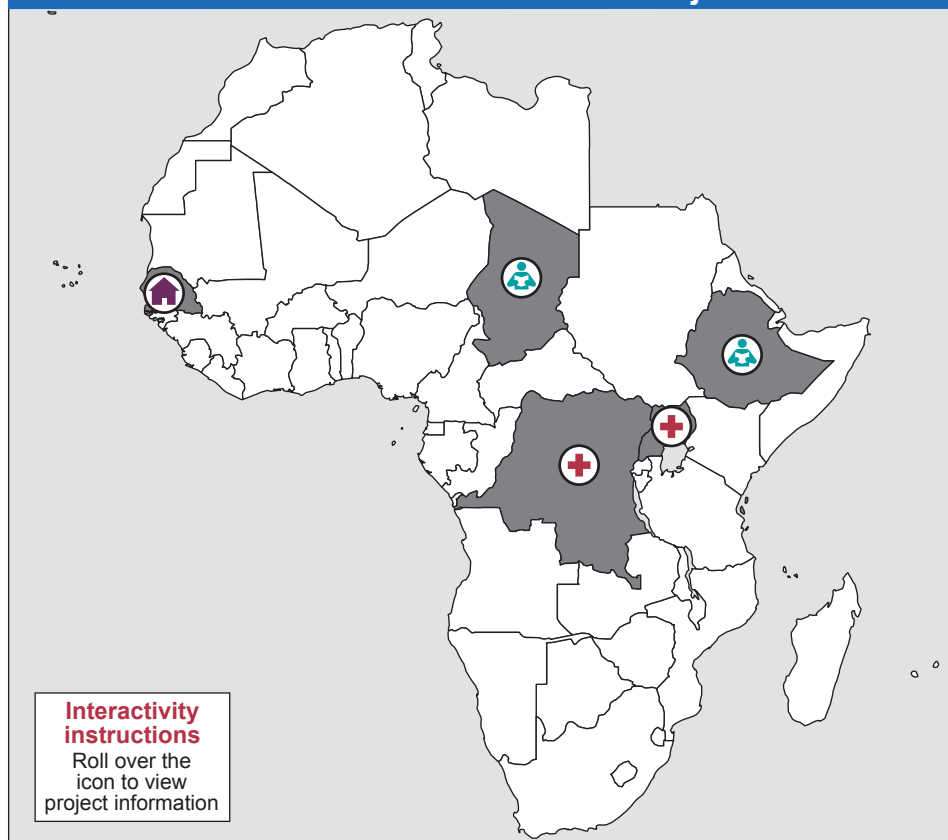
## Overview

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) operates in 52 countries on the African continent. The continent faces a wide range of challenges, including poverty; high birth rates; an increasingly large youth population; pandemic disease; and transnational threats, such as violent extremism, piracy, and narcotics trafficking. AFRICOM has conducted humanitarian assistance projects in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation.



Servicemembers unload cases of books for the Damerjog Schoolhouse in Djibouti. DOD delivered 1,400 books and 14 bookcases.

## Select AFRICOM and USAID Projects



## Funding<sup>a</sup>

Spending on AFRICOM's humanitarian assistance efforts has increased in recent years. Obligations for these efforts under AFRICOM's OHDACA program increased from about \$7.5 million in fiscal year 2008 to about \$11.4 million in fiscal year 2010. In addition, AFRICOM spent about \$16 million on HCA projects during the same time period. AFRICOM is also receiving a total of \$7.5 million from USAID from fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to help African nations respond to an influenza pandemic.

Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data; DOD (photo).

<sup>a</sup>All figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars. OHDACA figures represent obligations for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, as distinguished from the broader OHDACA program.

# Appendix IV: Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in U.S. Central Command's Area of Responsibility

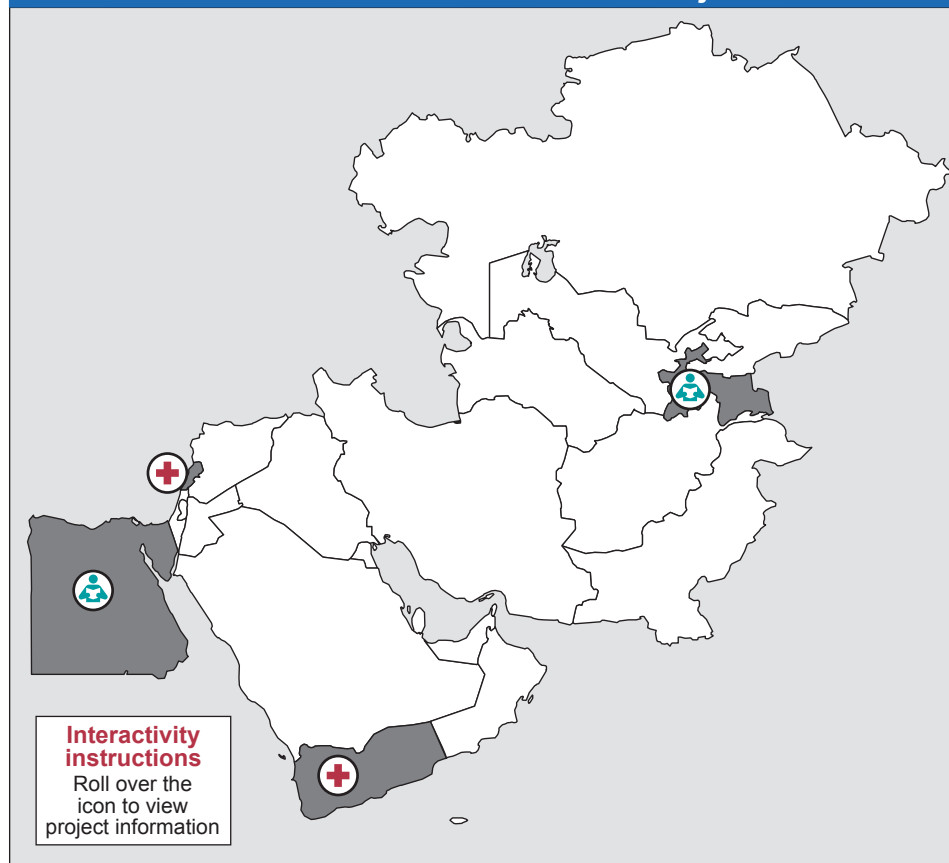
## Overview

U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) area of responsibility comprises 20 countries in three subregions: (1) Central and South Asia; (2) Southwest Asia, and (3) the Arabian Peninsula. Over the past several years, CENTCOM has been engaged in combat efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Other challenges within CENTCOM's area of responsibility include the lack of progress in achieving comprehensive Middle East peace, social, and economic instability; expanding youth populations; piracy; arms smuggling; human trafficking; narcotics; and weapons proliferation. CENTCOM has conducted humanitarian assistance projects in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation outside of Iraq and Afghanistan.



U.S. and local officials cut the ribbon to the Birdik Village School in Kyrgyzstan. U.S. military personnel and Kyrgyz citizens worked together to renovate the school in 2009.

## Select CENTCOM and USAID Projects



## Funding<sup>a</sup>

Spending on CENTCOM's humanitarian assistance efforts has fluctuated in recent years. Obligations for these efforts under CENTCOM's OHDACA program were about \$15.3 million in fiscal year 2005. In fiscal year 2007, funding peaked at about \$16.7 million and then dropped to approximately \$4.1 million in fiscal year 2010. In addition, CENTCOM spent \$342,870 on HCA projects outside of Iraq and Afghanistan during the same time period.

Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data; DOD (photo).

<sup>a</sup>All figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars. OHDACA figures represent obligations for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, as distinguished from the broader OHDACA program. This figure includes one project performed in Afghanistan, which DOD recorded at a cost of \$27,000.

# Appendix V: Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in U.S. European Command's Area of Responsibility

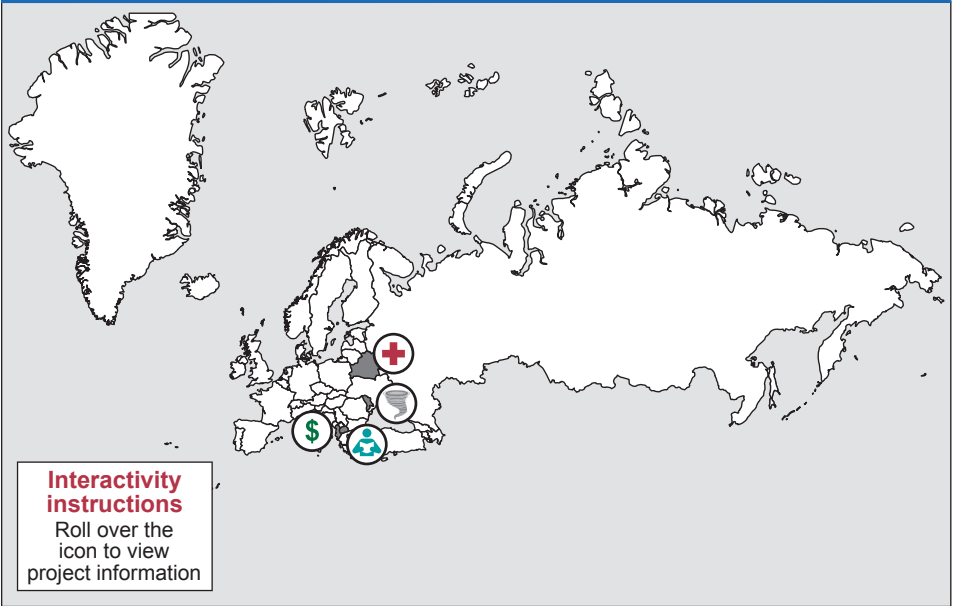
## Overview

U.S. European Command (EUCOM) is responsible for U.S. military relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and 51 countries in Europe, as well as parts of Asia and the Middle East. Countries in EUCOM's area of responsibility face challenges such as transnational and indigenous terrorism, ballistic missile threats, and ensuring cybersecurity among U.S. allies. EUCOM has conducted humanitarian assistance projects in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation.



Hungarian and U.S. Army engineers work together to replace the roof of the Zalahalap Elementary School in the Hungarian village of Tapoica.

## Select EUCOM and USAID Projects



## Funding<sup>a</sup>

Spending on EUCOM's humanitarian assistance efforts has fluctuated in recent years. Obligations for these efforts under EUCOM's OHDACA program were about \$9.1 million in fiscal year 2005. In fiscal year 2008, funding dropped to about \$5.2 million and then increased to about \$16.6 million in fiscal year 2010. In addition, EUCOM spent about \$4.3 million on HCA projects during the same time period.

Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data; DOD (photo).  
<sup>a</sup>All figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars. OHDACA figures represent obligations for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, as distinguished from the broader OHDACA program.



# Appendix VI: Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in U.S. Northern Command's Area of Responsibility

Overview

U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) conducts homeland defense, civil support, and security cooperation to defend and secure the United States and its interests. NORTHCOM is also responsible for supporting U.S. civil authorities and state national guard units in responding to natural and man-made disasters within the United States. NORTHCOM's area of responsibility includes the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Bahamas. Challenges in NORTHCOM's area of responsibility include transnational criminal organizations responsible for illicit trafficking of drugs, people, money, and weapons. In addition, NORTHCOM has conducted humanitarian assistance projects in Mexico and the Bahamas in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation.

U.S. Northern Command donates school supplies to a primary school in the Bahamas as part of a humanitarian assistance project.

Select NORTHCOM and USAID Projects

Funding<sup>a</sup>

NORTHCOM's humanitarian assistance program under OHDACA began in fiscal year 2008. Obligations for these efforts under NORTHCOM's OHDACA program were \$437,507 in fiscal year 2008 and more than \$2.9 million in fiscal year 2010. NORTHCOM does not conduct HCA projects within its area of responsibility.

Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data; DOD (photo).

<sup>a</sup>All figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars. OHDACA figures represent obligations for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, as distinguished from the broader OHDACA program.

# Appendix VII: Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in U.S. Pacific Command's Area of Responsibility

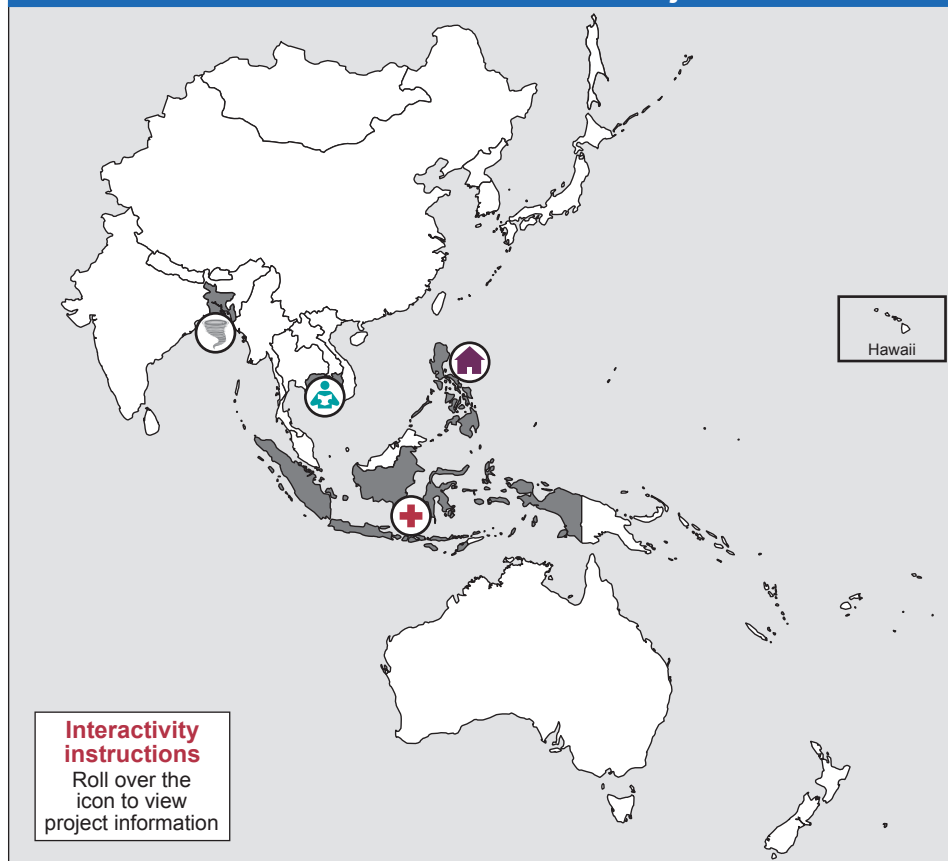
## Overview

U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) operates in 36 countries in the Asia Pacific region, which encompasses about 50 percent of the world's population. This region faces several threats, including those posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities; transnational violent extremist organizations; China's significant military modernization with unclear intent; territorial disputes; transnational criminal activity; and humanitarian crises, such as pandemics, famines, and natural disasters. PACOM has conducted humanitarian assistance projects in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation.



With the help of local Cambodians, Navy engineers work to complete a well-drilling humanitarian and civic assistance project as part of the Pacific Partnership 2010 exercise.

## Select PACOM and USAID Projects<sup>a</sup>



## Funding<sup>b</sup>

Spending on PACOM's humanitarian assistance efforts has increased in recent years. Obligations for these efforts under PACOM's OHDACA program increased from about \$17.3 million in fiscal year 2005 to about \$19.9 in fiscal year 2010. In addition, PACOM spent almost \$22 million on HCA projects during the same time period. PACOM is also receiving a total of \$7.5 million from USAID from fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to help nations in the Asia-Pacific region respond to an influenza pandemic.

Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data; DOD (photo).

<sup>a</sup>This map does not include Antarctica, which is also included in Pacific Command's area of responsibility.

<sup>b</sup>All figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars. OHDACA figures represent obligations for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, as distinguished from the broader OHDACA program.

# Appendix VIII: Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in U.S. Southern Command's Area of Responsibility

## Overview

U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) operates in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. These regions face challenges such as poverty, illicit trafficking, natural disasters; and violent extremist organizations. SOUTHCOM officials stated that its role in humanitarian assistance has greatly expanded over the past 5 years, in part because of increased awareness of the command's program. SOUTHCOM has conducted humanitarian assistance projects in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, and disaster preparation.



Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS *Comfort* is pushed from the pier by tugboats after completing nearly a week of medical aid in Trinidad and Tobago as part of the 4-month humanitarian deployment to Latin America and the Caribbean, providing medical treatment to a dozen countries.

## Select SOUTHCOM and USAID Projects



## Funding<sup>a</sup>

Obligations for humanitarian assistance efforts under SOUTHCOM's OHDACA program have fluctuated from about \$3.5 million in fiscal year 2005 to a height of about \$21.4 million in fiscal year 2009. In fiscal year 2010, the most recent year for which data are available, SOUTHCOM obligated about \$17.5 million for its OHDACA humanitarian assistance efforts. In addition, SOUTHCOM spent almost \$32.5 million on HCA projects during the same time period.

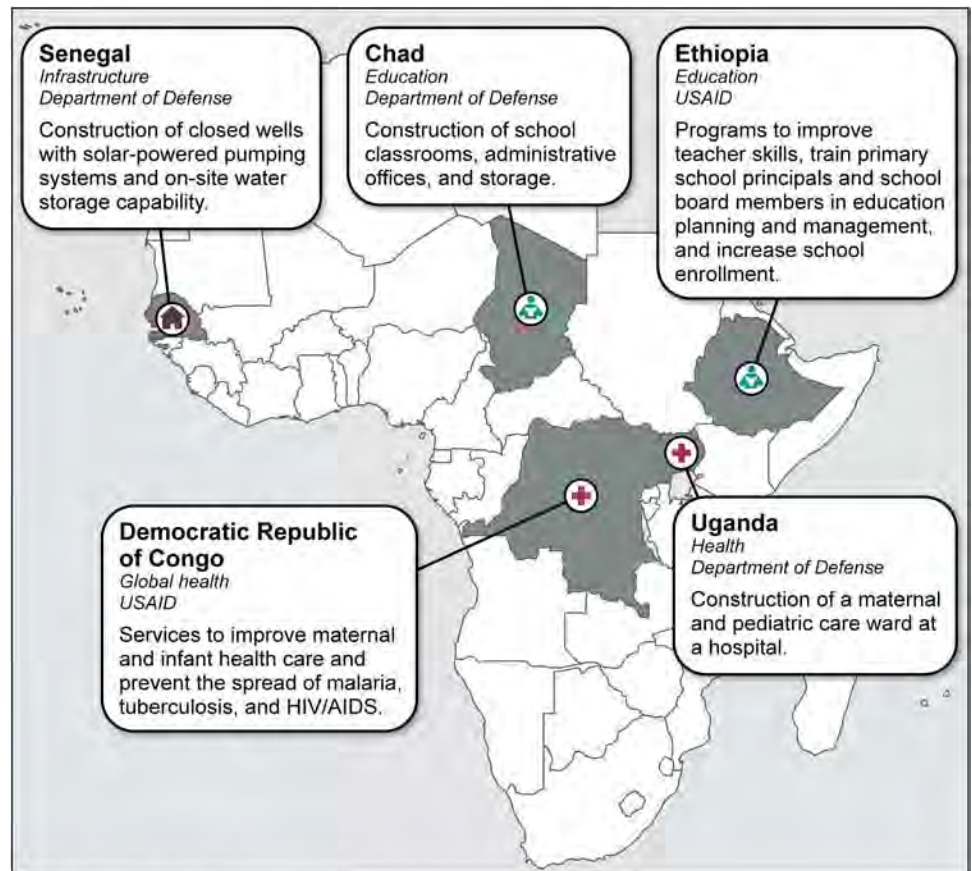
Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data; DOD (photo).

<sup>a</sup>All figures are in constant fiscal year 2011 dollars. OHDACA figures represent obligations for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program, as distinguished from the broader OHDACA program.



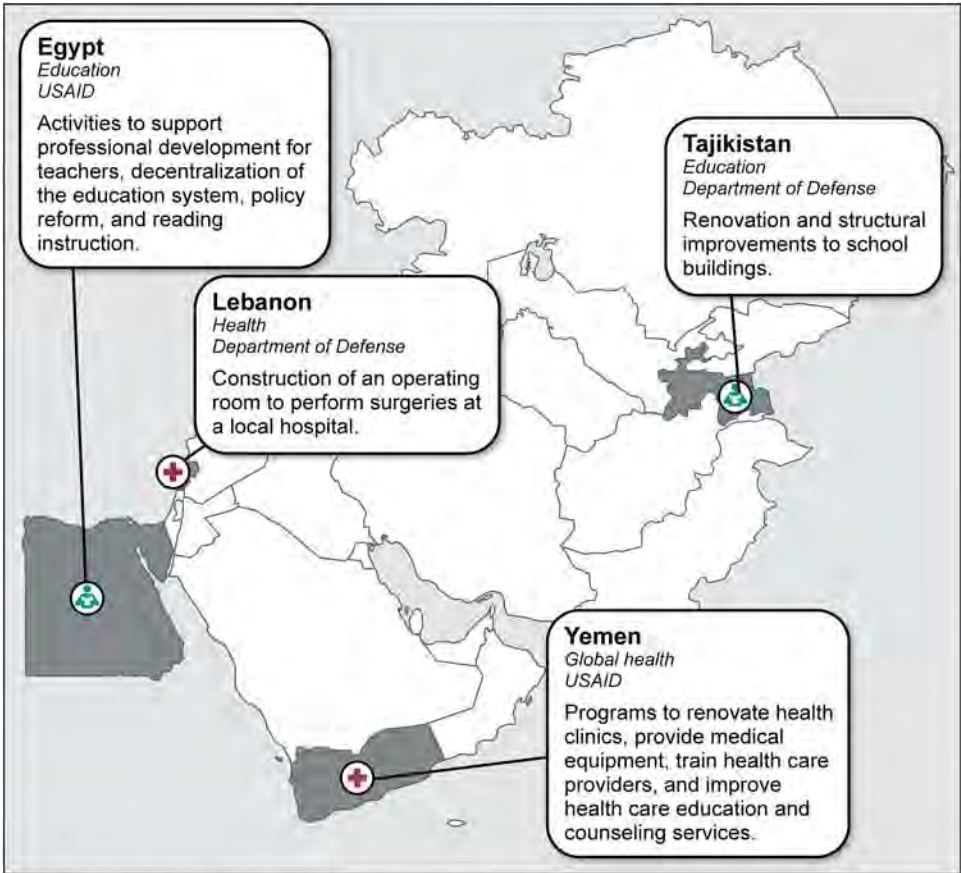
# Appendix IX: Noninteractive Graphics and Text for Appendixes III-VIII

Select AFRICOM and USAID Projects (see app. III)



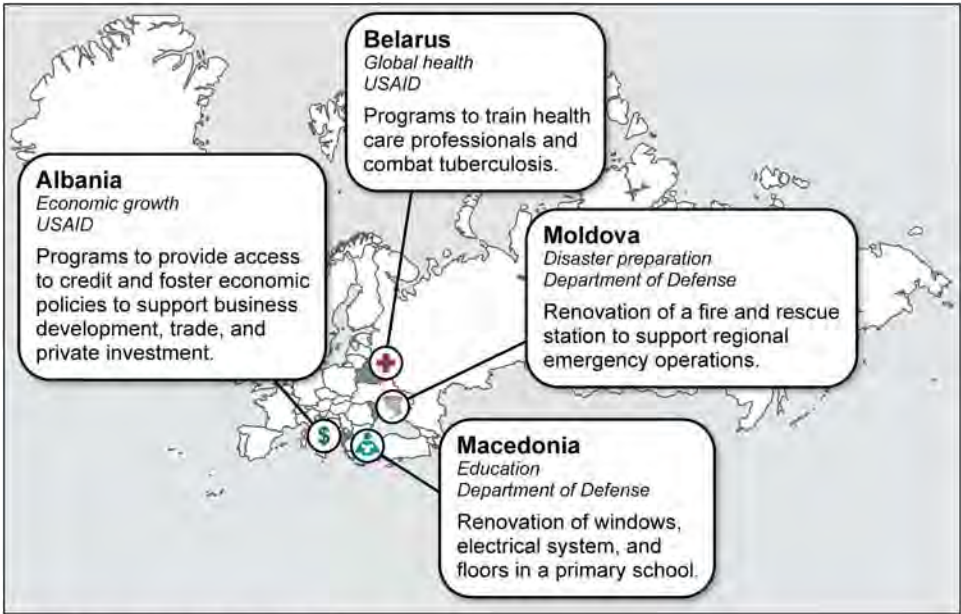
Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data.

Select CENTCOM and USAID Projects (see app. IV)



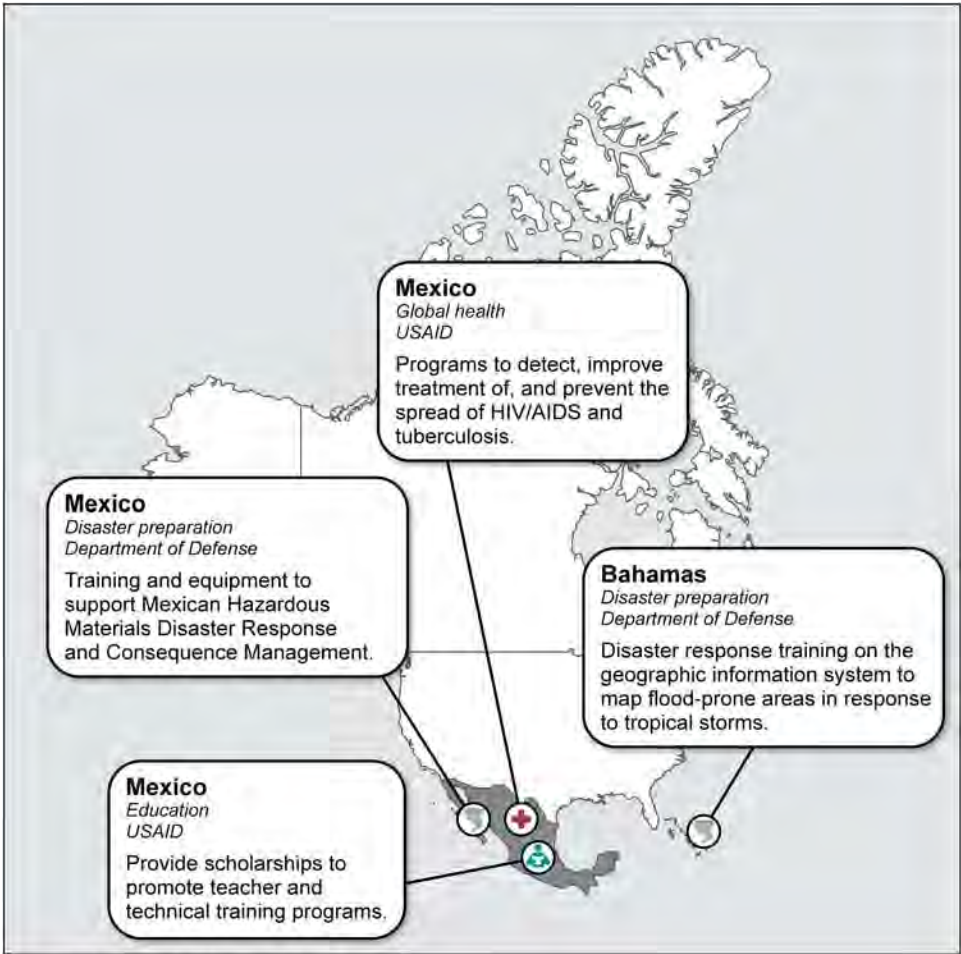
Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data.

Select EUCOM and USAID Projects (see app. V)



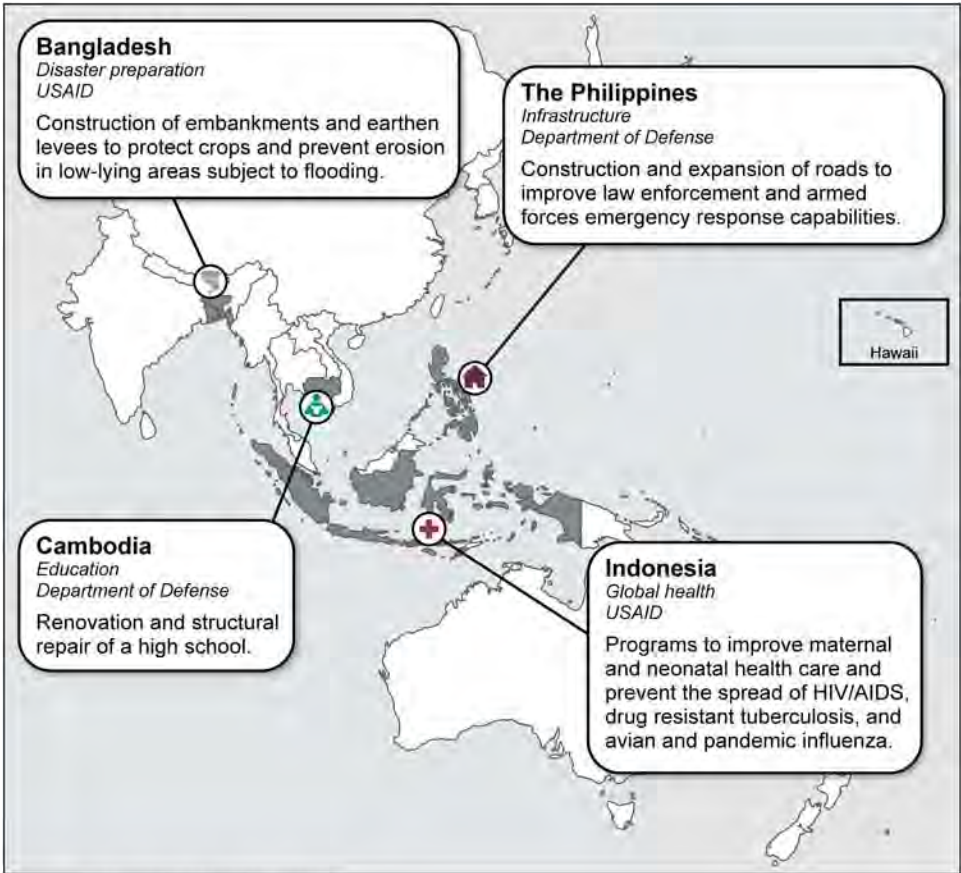
Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data.

Select NORTHCOM and USAID Projects (see app. VI)



Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data.

Select PACOM and USAID Projects (see app. VII)



Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data.



Select SOUTHCOM and USAID Projects (see app. VIII)



Sources: GAO analysis of DOD and USAID data.

# Appendix X: Comments from the Department of Defense

We received DOD's comments on January 23, 2012



SPECIAL OPERATIONS/  
LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

## OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

2500 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2500

Ms. Marie Mak  
Assistant Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Mak:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO-12-XXX, "HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed to Manage Military's Efforts," dated February 12 (GAO Code 351534). DoD generally concurs with the seven recommendations with additional comments. Our response to the recommendations is enclosed.

As discussed in the report, DoD conducts humanitarian assistance activities through the Humanitarian Assistance (HA) program funded by the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) appropriation and through the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) program funded by the Service Departments. These activities enable DoD to address and mitigate the destabilizing effects of human suffering and privation through the provision of humanitarian support in the sectors of education, health care, basic infrastructure and disaster preparedness. Collaboration with interagency partners – particularly with the U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as with host country officials and non-governmental organizations operating in these countries – enables DoD to apply meaningful and targeted assistance complementary to that provided by other US government agencies and in support of U.S. national security objectives.

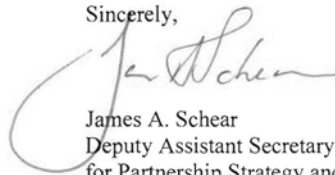
As GAO acknowledges in this report, any overlap in the types of projects implemented by DoD and State or USAID is not necessarily undesirable – rather than wasting resources, such overlap may exemplify complementarity. In fact, as the funding made available for the HA and HCA programs has grown in recent years, the Department has taken steps to ensure that projects are consistent with State Department and USAID strategies and objectives for individual countries. DoD policy requires these projects to be coordinated with interagency representatives before being vetted at the geographic combatant commands to ensure conformity with both policy and program management guidance. The current policy guidance, furthermore, places stringent requirements on projects to promote sustainability, capacity-building, and coordination with local stakeholders.

GAO identifies several areas of potential improvement in DoD's HA and HCA programs, and the Department has already begun to address these issues through both policy and process modifications. To the extent that the report describes possible improvements to interagency

coordination and visibility issues, however, the Department's ability to address key external constraints is limited. The report notes that "USAID officials said that their agency has staffing shortages, and it can be a burden on USAID personnel to have to coordinate...on DoD's humanitarian assistance projects." As the lead federal agency for foreign development activities with oversight responsibility for related activities conducted by other US government agencies, USAID must be properly resourced to conduct its mission to maximize effectiveness and minimize the very overlap and duplication that this report seeks to identify.

Our point of contact for this action is Ms. Anne Knight, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, commercial phone (703) 692-0103 or email address: [anne.knight@osd.mil](mailto:anne.knight@osd.mil).

Sincerely,



James A. Schear  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense  
for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations

Enclosure:  
As stated



**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED JANUARY 2012  
GAO-12-XXX (GAO CODE 351534)**

**“HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: PROJECT  
EVALUATIONS AND BETTER INFORMATION SHARING NEEDED TO  
MANAGE MILITARY’S EFFORTS”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS  
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations to help improve consistency in program implementation by issuing a departmental instruction and updating accompanying guidance on DoD’s Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) humanitarian assistance program. In issuing the updated guidance, the department may wish to consider further clarifying the use of OHDACA funds for specific project evaluation purposes.

**DoD RESPONSE:** DoD partially concurs with the recommendation. DoD is in the process of developing updated policy guidance for the Humanitarian Assistance program, with the intent to use the updated guidance – once finalized and disseminated – as the foundation for a DoD Instruction on Humanitarian Assistance. The updated policy guidance will clarify existing guidance requiring combatant commands to assess their HA projects in terms of both performance and effectiveness in meeting project objectives.

DoD does not concur that the Secretary of Defense should direct the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations to help issue a departmental instruction. DoD Instructions are issued by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and not by Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency to require that the combatant commands and other DOD users of the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database provide complete and timely updates to OHDACA humanitarian assistance project information within the system.

**DoD RESPONSE:** DoD partially concurs with the recommendation. The Department concurs that the combatant commands and other DoD users of the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System (OHASIS) database be required to provide complete and timely updates to OHDACA humanitarian assistance project information within the system. Having previously recognized this as a concern, DSCA initiated in 2010 a multi-year commitment to develop an entirely reconstructed OHASIS system (OHASIS 2) to fix deficiencies in the first iteration of OHASIS (OHASIS 1), to include exploring and implementing methods to ensure complete and timely updates.

However, DoD nonconcurs with the notion that Secretary of Defense must direct the Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency to implement this requirement. As stated above, efforts are well underway to address the concern of ensuring complete and timely updates to the OHASIS database. This requirement is one of the drivers behind the development of OHASIS 2, which began in January 2010 and became operational in February 2011. OHASIS 2 will capture data for FY12 data and beyond. The OHASIS database as a system was first established in 2007 as a project approval and tracking system and has evolved to meet ever increasing demands. OHASIS 2 is a more complete management and reporting system that continues to evolve to provide more analytical capability. We intend to utilize advancements in the capabilities of OHASIS 2 to tie HA program funding back to combatant commands' and other DoD users' ability to provide complete and timely information into the system.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency to employ a risk-based approach to review and modify project evaluation requirements for the OHDACA humanitarian assistance program to measure the long-term effects of humanitarian assistance projects, and take steps to ensure compliance with the requirements.

**DoD RESPONSE:** DoD partially concurs with the recommendation. The Department concurs with the recommendation to modify project evaluation requirements to measure the long-term effects of humanitarian assistance projects and take steps to ensure compliance with project evaluation requirements. DoD is working continuously to refine the project evaluation requirements to ensure they provide useful qualitative and quantitative data that will facilitate the measuring of long-term effects of the HA projects. Efforts currently underway seek to refine project evaluations so that the data collected is more useful, while simultaneously making the collection process less burdensome so as to encourage the capture of relevant data. A complementary effort under development is creating an appropriate method to encourage compliance with the new project evaluation requirements. The Department believes that the process of developing and

refining evaluation requirements should be ongoing, as these processes are never truly “complete”, but aims to have refined and implemented updated project evaluation requirements in the near future. The initial 30-day After Action Reporting capability will be implemented by the third quarter of FY12. Initial analytical and reporting tools leveraging this data will be developed during the third and fourth quarters of FY12. Also to be completed by the third quarter of FY12 will be a scorecard for combatant commands to evaluate the progress of projects. This scorecard will highlight when projects are past their completion timeframe and when After Action Reports (30 day or 1 year) are due and overdue.

While the Department concurs with the recommendation to employ a risk-based approach to review project evaluation requirements, such implementation will require the accumulation of data over time in order to define the risk criteria and apply them effectively. Given the paucity of project evaluation data currently available (as alluded to by the GAO), the Department believes it will take some time to formulate a significant and reliable risk-based approach to project evaluations requirements. In order to implement a significant and reliable risk-based approach to project evaluations, more data must first be collected and analyzed. OHASIS 2 is designed to provide the platform for this type of activity, and we anticipate that at least one year’s worth of data will be required for developing a risk-based approach that will reduce the number of AARs required yet yield sufficient information to determine project/program success.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to require that the combatant commands and other DOD users of the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database provide complete and timely updates to Humanitarian Civic Assistance (HCA) project information within the system.

**DoD RESPONSE:** DoD concurs with the recommendation. Since assuming responsibility of the HCA program on Jan 1, 2011, the Joint Staff has made numerous improvements to the management of the program and has already taken steps to address management issues identified over the course of GAO’s review of the HCA program. Enhancing the functionality of OHASIS has been the first step to ensuring that combatant commands provide regular and complete updates on HCA projects. In December 2011 the Joint Staff, in coordination with the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and the combatant commands, released an upgraded version of the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System database for HCA project nominations. The new system standardizes input for project review and provides improved features that

enhance coordination and communication both within DoD and with the interagency.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to employ a risk-based approach to review and modify project evaluation requirements for the HCA program to measure the long-term effects of projects and take steps to ensure compliance with the requirements.

**DoD RESPONSE:** DoD concurs with the recommendation. Since assuming responsibility of the HCA program on 1 Jan 2011, the Joint Staff has made significant improvements to the management of the HCA program and already undertaken initiatives to address program data gaps in advance of the release of this report. Additionally, the Joint Staff, in coordination with the combatant commands, is in the process of supporting the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations in the revision of the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) guidance.

The Joint Staff has established monthly HCA teleconferences with the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), and the combatant commands to clarify policy guidance, discuss business rules and best practices, and identify avenues for improvement. In late January 2012, the Joint Staff will begin developing amplified guidance for the assessment of these HCA projects and will begin coordination on an upgraded version of OHASIS HCA for after action reporting. This expanded guidance on project assessments will be informed by DSCA's concurrent risk-based approach to evaluations of project effectiveness.

The Global Theatre Security Cooperation Management Information System (G-TSCMIS), which is currently under development and is mentioned in this report as an ongoing information-sharing project, will also link into OHASIS and may present a solution to help resolve many of the reporting, tracking and follow-up issues highlighted in the report. G-TSCMIS will be DoD's authoritative reporting and tracking database for the Department's security cooperation activities – including humanitarian assistance – and will be a comprehensive, single-point database with tools to link to, arrange, manage and view the Department's collective engagement activities.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** The GAO recommends that the Secretaries of Defense and State, and the Administrator of USAID, develop a framework to formalize interagency information sharing on humanitarian/development assistance efforts, such as a common database. Such a framework could involve

selecting an existing initiative, such as the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, to be used by all agencies for their assistance efforts, or taking steps to facilitate interoperability among the agencies' existing independent mechanisms.

**DoD RESPONSE:** DoD concurs with the recommendation. As State and USAID have larger foreign assistance programs, DoD will engage these agencies to determine what formats and/or mechanisms could be implemented at reasonable cost to enhance information sharing. DoD has already taken steps to share information about its humanitarian assistance program with State and USAID by providing these agencies access to the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System (OHASIS) database. DoD has also sought to ensure the compatibility of OHASIS and the nascent Global Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System to promote the integration of HA program data with those of other security cooperation programs. As currently constructed, OHASIS has a framework in place for sharing data with systems such as the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, which uses a category/sector taxonomy that could potentially be adopted by OHASIS to facilitate information-sharing.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** The GAO recommends that the Secretaries of Defense and State, and the Administrator of USAID, collaborate to develop guidance that provides a common understanding of the terminology used by DoD, State, and USAID related to their humanitarian and development assistance efforts.

**DoD Response:** DoD concurs with the recommendation. Although State, USAID, and DoD use different terms in part because of the organizations' different authorities, mission sets, and expertise, a better understanding across the agencies of the terms used would likely facilitate coordination on common types of projects. DoD will engage State and USAID to determine the scope, specific objectives, and timetable for issuing guidance establishing this common understanding of humanitarian terminology.

# Appendix XI: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State

Chief Financial Officer

Washington, D.C. 20520

JAN 20 2012

Mr. Loren Yager  
Managing Director  
International Affairs and Trade  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Yager:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed to Manage Military's Efforts," GAO Job Code 351534.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Anita Menghetti, Senior Coordinator, Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance at (202) 647-2707.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Millette".

James L. Millette

cc: GAO – John Pendleton  
F– Robert H. Goldberg  
State/OIG – Evelyn Klemstine

**Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report**

**HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE:  
Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed  
to Manage Military's Efforts.**  
(GAO-12-XXX, GAO Code 351534)

The Department of State appreciates the opportunity to comment on this GAO report entitled "*HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed to Manage Military's Efforts,*" and notes the timeliness of the report and importance of the issues under review.

The Department of State recognizes DOD's role and interest in engaging with civilian and military counterparts around the world in order to achieve objectives such as gaining access and influence, fostering partnerships, maintaining capabilities and training our forces. We also recognize that confusion arises within the inter-agency and international development and humanitarian assistance communities when in the pursuit of their objectives DOD activities secondarily produce development or humanitarian assistance-like outcomes.

**Recommendation:** To improve transparency and oversight and to maximize the benefits derived from U.S. government resources devoted to humanitarian and development assistance activities, we recommend that the Secretaries of Defense and State, and the Administrator of USAID take the following two actions:

- Develop a framework to formalize interagency information sharing on humanitarian/development assistance efforts, such as a common database. Such a framework could involve selecting an existing initiative such as the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, to be used by all agencies for their assistance efforts, or taking steps to facilitate interoperability among the agencies' existing independent mechanisms.
- Collaborate to develop guidance that provides a common understanding of the terminology used by DOD, State, and USAID related to their humanitarian and development efforts.

**Response:** The Department agrees with the over-arching objective of improving transparency and oversight of humanitarian development assistance activities. With respect to the first recommended action, State, USAID and DOD are already in discussion with respect to broadening the Foreign Assistance Dashboard to include DOD's foreign assistance. However, it should be noted that the Dashboard

2

is most useful for ex-post facto accountability and transparency. State is also working on rolling out the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) process, which in its first year will go out to Missions in the Western Hemisphere and Europe. This process will require Missions to develop strategic plans in coordination with all USG entities at post, and may assist over-all coordination and planning.

State is also of the opinion that the most important locus of coordination to ensure integration and minimize overlap is at the Mission level. We would therefore underscore points raised in other portions of the report with respect to Mission level coordination and the obstacles thereto.

With respect to the second recommended action, State, USAID and DOD already work together on planning and could utilize this group to identify appropriate representatives from each agency to focus on taking action with respect to the second part of the recommendation. State would caveat, however, that the confusion with respect to terminology is not based on a lack of trying to understand one another, but rather the inconsistent terminology and objectives of DOD's OHDACA authorization, when compared to legislative mandates governing the work of the Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration at State and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance at USAID.



# Appendix XII: Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

JAN 19 2012

John H. Pendleton  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management Team  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Pendleton:

I am pleased to provide the formal response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report entitled "HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed to Manage Military's Efforts" (Engagement Code 351534) for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The enclosed USAID comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this audit review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Angelique M. Crumbly".

Angelique M. Crumbly  
Acting Assistant to the Administrator  
Bureau for Management  
U.S. Agency for International Development

Enclosure: a/s

- 2 -

**USAID COMMENTS ON GAO DRAFT REPORT - "HUMANITARIAN AND  
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing  
Needed to Manage Military's Efforts." (Engagement Code 351534)**

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) values the opportunity to comment on this GAO report and commends GAO on the timeliness and importance of these issues.

While the Department of Defense (DOD) has a long history of intervention in humanitarian emergencies and conducting development-like activities under the rubric of "humanitarian assistance," this role has been evolving and expanding in recent years with the advent of DOD Directive 3000.05 and changes in policy, authorities, and strategies. USAID recognizes DOD's role and interest in engaging with civilian and military counterparts around the world. Gaining access and influence, building partnerships, maintaining capabilities and training our forces are among the important objectives our nation achieves through DoD's engagement. In some cases, there is a humanitarian assistance-like outcome as a means to achieving legitimate DoD access, influence, and training objectives, but these are generally only a means to a different objective.

In this vein, USAID notes GAO's recommendation regarding clarifying DOD's role in humanitarian assistance as the central issue at stake. Given various international norms and guidelines such as the Oslo Guidelines, development and humanitarian assistance is the domain of civilian authorities, with a limited role for DOD where their unique capabilities are needed. Clarification of distinct objectives, conditions, and terms of engagement of civilians and military in what is called "humanitarian assistance" by both agencies would be helpful. New terminology would also help distinguish the distinct goals and roles and responsibilities. DOD and USAID would also benefit from a clearer understanding of DOD's expected role where humanitarian assistance is the ultimate objective, vis-à-vis civilian agencies, as noted in this thorough report. We will continue to better clarify our roles in providing U.S. humanitarian assistance overseas.

**Recommendations**

USAID appreciates the recommendations offered by the GAO. GAO has clearly and effectively identified key issues such as limited program guidance, poor data management, and limited program evaluation as significant weaknesses for DOD's implementation of their humanitarian assistance programs. We concur that these are challenges shared by the defense, diplomacy and development agencies (3Ds) as we try to develop closer coordination and collaboration mechanisms. The challenges identified by the report were already the focus of discussion and engagement by State, DOD and USAID, which recognize the need for improved communication and information sharing frameworks. The 3Ds also recognize the need for joint guidance to foment understanding of each other's terminology and planning processes. In that regard, the 3D Planning Group, discussed in the report has produced a 3D planning guide and is working on developing a reference library for 3D planners. These are clear examples of USAID, State, and DOD's joint efforts to address some of the challenges and weaknesses identified by this report.

- 3 -

**Recommendation 1:** To improve transparency and oversight and to maximize the benefits derived from U.S. resources devoted to humanitarian/development assistance activities, we recommend that the Secretaries of Defense and State, and the Administrator of USAID develop a framework to formalize interagency information sharing on humanitarian/development assistance efforts, such as a common database. Such a framework could involve selecting an existing initiative, such as the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, to be used by all agencies for their assistance efforts, or taking steps to facilitate interoperability among the agencies' existing independent mechanisms.

**USAID Comments:** USAID concurs with the recommendation. USAID welcomes GAO's recommendation and plans to explore the idea further with DOD and State. The difficulties in doing so, however, should not be underestimated. Previous attempts to develop a common assistance framework and databases have proven to run counter to existing authorities and practices. Among the efforts currently underway are the Global Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System (TSCMIS), a DOD-funded program; the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, which is limited to budget information; and the UNITY Joint Capability Technology Demonstration, in which USAID has participated for the past several years. A common problem with these databases is that they are not integrated with USAID enterprise databases, and require separate data entry. The goal of a common view of U.S. activities overseas remains elusive.

**Recommendation 2:** To improve transparency and oversight and to maximize the benefits derived from U.S. government resources devoted to humanitarian/development assistance activities, we recommend that the Secretaries of Defense and State, and the Administrator of USAID collaborate to develop guidance that provides a common understanding of the terminology used by Department of Defense (DOD), State Department, and USAID related to their humanitarian and development assistance efforts.

**USAID Comments:** USAID concurs with the recommendation. USAID, DOD and State Department are already taking concrete steps in improving planning collaboration and coordination among the 3D agencies. The 3D agencies are actively working together developing guides, tools and other products to improve 3D planning collaboration and coordination to achieve the coherence and unity of effort needed to preserve and advance U.S. national interests.

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# Appendix XIII: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

John H. Pendleton, (202) 512-3489 or [pendletonj@gao.gov](mailto:pendletonj@gao.gov)

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Assistant Directors Alissa Czyz, Marie Mak, and James Michels; and Renee Brown, Justin Fisher, Lonnie McAllister, Meghan Perez, Steven Putansu, Amie Steele, Cheryl Weissman, Michael Willems, and Richard Winsor made major contributions to this report.

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